

S H E R R Y V E L A S C O

LESBIANS
IN EARLY
MODERN
SPAIN



*Lesbians in Early
Modern Spain*

LESBIANS
in
Early Modern Spain

Sherry Velasco

Vanderbilt University Press

NASHVILLE

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For Dulce and JoJo

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1

Naming the Silent Sin

One can only speculate about the breathless whispers in dark corridors against a backdrop of Inquisitorial fear and conventual boredom, or guess at the imaginary ecclesiastical headlines summing up the miraculous event: *Flying Crucifix Tattles on Nuns' Sexual Sin*. When the Carmelite prioress Ana de San Agustín lent her favorite crucifix necklace to one of the sisters, she could not have anticipated that the sister's nocturnal tryst with another nun would so shock the little bronze Christ as to make it unhinge itself and fly expressly back to the prioress. When a surprised Sor Ana questioned the floating Christ ("My Lord, why have you come back?"), the two nuns' more-than-sisterly devotion became an open secret. Although the bronze Christ's answer was mercifully vague ("because there they are offending me"), the prioress must have had a fairly good idea of the offense in question.

Only a few years earlier, in a civil case registered in 1603, Inés de Santa Cruz and her "domestic partner," Catalina Ledesma, had been arrested for female sodomy and prostitution in Salamanca. Interestingly, the prosecution relied largely on testimony from neighbors reporting on—and inferring the meaning of—the sounds of passion and perhaps the creaking of bedboards as heard through a wall.

Studying early modern texts (both literary and historical), we discover recurrent and diverse representations of female homoeroticism. These include—on one end of the spectrum—public figures such as Catalina de Erauso (more famously known as "the Lieutenant Nun") and Queen Christina of Sweden, both of whom were celebrated by the king of Spain and the pope in Rome. On the other end of the spectrum, there are records of lesbians treated as criminals, such as Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma, as well as others investigated by Inquisitional and civil authorities. The wide-ranging representations of these women (and their fictional counterparts) are at the heart of this study.

Many of the early modern texts analyzed in this book focus on the nature of specific sex acts. Following what critics frequently describe as “the acts paradigm,” an initial assessment of these narratives might suggest a pre-modern understanding of nonnormative sexuality simply in terms of punitive sex acts that were not linked to the individual’s identity.¹ However, a comprehensive analysis of the interplay among these cultural texts—whether the analysis is of a legal, medical, theological, literary, or iconographic nature—points to a more nuanced conception of same-sex relations between women. Simply put, the “acts” versus “identity” debate in lesbian criticism (also described in terms of essentialism versus social constructionism, and behavior versus essence)—a debate that constructs a distinction between “then” and “now”—ignores many of the complexities of desire evident in the multiplicity of texts that portray same-sex attraction between women.² Perhaps this is an indication of how behaviors, personal characteristics, preferences, choices, and emotions, when considered in tandem, create a profile for women who stand outside the margins of conventional social and erotic expectations for the female sex. Therefore, I use the term “lesbian” in the same spirit with which some scholars evoke “heterosexual,” “homosexual,” or “homoeerotic”: as a general category to denote an individual’s romantic or erotic interests (or the perception of those interests) with the understanding that the terminology and the nuances of most concepts vary over time.³ One might even argue that the word “lesbian” is perhaps less anachronistic than other terms, given that during the early modern period, “lesbian” and other variations on “Lesbos” and “Sappho” were, in fact, associated with women who were attracted to other women.⁴ Pierre Brantôme, for example, wrote sometime around 1584 that “two ladies that be in love one with the other . . . sleeping together in one bed . . . such is the character of the *Lesbian* women,” especially, as the author states, in Spain, Italy, Turkey, and France (Allinson translation, 128–29; emphasis mine). Nicolas Chorier commented in the seventeenth century that “Italian, Spanish, and French women love one another. . . . At first this custom was common especially among the Lesbians: Sappho enhanced this name and thus dignifies it” (153). Other references to lesbian desire might be more subtle. Famed playwright Pedro Calderón de la Barca gave a wink and a nod to the open secret of Queen Christina’s personal and romantic preferences when, in a play based on the monarch’s life, he named her lady-in-waiting “Lesbia” and then devised a temporary plot resolution that had two women agreeing to a same-sex marriage.

Not unexpectedly, most scholars of early modern same-sex eroticism feel obligated to address the issue of terminology when discussing their research.⁵ Following Michel Foucault’s declaration that homosexuality as an identity

category did not exist before the nineteenth century, many scholars are hesitant to use “the L word,” resorting instead to phrases such as “female homoeroticism” or “same-sex passion between women.” In her study of female homoeroticism in early modern drama, Denise A. Walen specifies that “although ‘lesbian’ as a term identifies women who love and have sexual relations with other women, it also connotes a specific twentieth-century understanding of sexual identity, an identity that research suggests did not exist in early modern cultures. Throughout this study, therefore, the phrase ‘female homoeroticism’ defines representations of women’s desire for other women” (6–7).

In a more inclusive model that revives and revises Adrienne Rich’s “lesbian continuum,” Judith M. Bennett proposes the concept of “lesbian-like,” which allows her to consider women who might be associated with transgressive practices regardless of whether the perceptions of their romantic interests include specifically homoerotic behavior—“women whose lives might have particularly offered opportunities for same-sex love; women who resisted norms of feminine behavior based on heterosexual marriage; women who lived in circumstances that allowed them to nurture and support other women” (110). For Bennett, the “lesbian” in the hyphenated construction forces historians “to deal with their own heteronormative assumptions and with the possibilities of lesbian expressions in the past,” and the “like” introduces a line of investigation based on resemblance rather than identity (117). Valerie Traub establishes her grounds for using “lesbian” in the early modern context by qualifying that in her study, “‘lesbian’ refers to a representational image, a rhetorical figure, a discursive effect, rather than a stable epistemological or historical category” (15).

Some scholars use “lesbian” out of convenience, and others from a belief that to avoid the term would mean participating in the ideological muting of the subject that makes their research necessary in the first place. My decision to use the term reflects both these reasons. At the same time, my interest in early modern texts inspires me to rescue the early and supposedly inclusive meaning of the terms “Lesbos” or “Sappho”—terms that, in context, would have suggested the idea of a woman who desires another woman. Since it is impossible to posit a transhistorical or transcultural meaning for any word or concept, I use the term “lesbian” within the historical and cultural contextual scope of this study, and in doing so hope to avoid what Harriette Andreadis describes as scholarly reinscription of “contemporary paradigms by reading earlier literature” (19). And yet, regardless of how each scholar approaches her or his material to gain insight and accuracy, I agree with Amanda Powell that prudence with terminology and concepts should not be restricted to same-sex eroticism:

Caution about anachronism with regard to sexual orientation arises only with the possibility of nonheterosexual readings. (Scholars and teachers do not explain away courtship in Garcilaso or Góngora, Sidney or Shakespeare. . . . Nor when a male poet addresses a woman do instructors reassure students, "Of course he didn't mean this 'heterosexually'—not as we use the concept 'heterosexual' today.") (211)

Elsewhere in these texts, in the cases of literary women already known for their transgressive "masculine" interests, the absence of expected references to Sappho could be a sign of self-censorship. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and María de Zayas, two of the three most important canonical women writers in Spain's early modern empire, excluded Sappho from their lists of illustrious women.⁶ Some critics believe that the obvious omissions were due to efforts by the writers to avoid further scrutiny of their own suggestive relationships or activities. Nina M. Scott is right to take note of Sor Juana's failure to mention Sappho in her "Respuesta a Sor Filotea." According to Scott, Sor Juana's intimate friendship with the countess of Paredes could easily have made the famous Mexican nun think twice about confessing admiration for a famous poet whose name was and is often emblematic of lesbian tendencies. Stating that an informed, contemporary reader of Sor Juana's letter would have expected to find Sappho on her list of admired women, Scott speculates on the grounds for the obviously intentional slight: "Perhaps Sor Juana deemed it wise not to mention this taboo topic in ecclesiastical circles. It is also possible that she wanted to avoid any allusion to female friendships because of the intense relationship between herself and the countess of Paredes" ("La gran turba," 209). Similarly, Margaret R. Greer questions whether María de Zayas's omission of Sappho from the list of "foremothers" in her preface might indicate that Zayas was "carefully avoiding the admission of lesbian attraction" (33), particularly given the praise for Zayas from her contemporaries in terms of Lesbos and Sappho (not to mention satirical comments poking fun at her masculine appearance).

Certainly early modern readers, observers, and consumers made various assumptions and passed diverse judgments on women who preferred the romantic company of other women. While these associations of erotic behaviors and being of a certain "type" would later take shape as more explicit declarations of sexual identity, the hesitancy to use "the L word" in early modern studies may have encouraged some individuals to dismiss serious inquiry of how same-sex relations were perceived, controlled, and at times silenced while in other moments celebrated during a period when admitting such desire could bring serious legal and social consequences. As Laura Gowing reminds her readers, "'Lesbian' has been used since at least the tenth

century to connect the story of Sappho with sexual relations between women. . . . Long before sexologists theorized about homosexuality and heterosexuality, sexual acts still influenced ideas of identity" (125–26).

As this study illustrates repeatedly, there were a variety of terms, phrases, and detailed descriptions used in the early modern period to discuss women who transgressed traditional codes of sexual conduct prescribed for the female gender. The terms and phrases included *somética* (sodomite), *bu-jarrona* (female sodomite), *cañita* (little cane), *donna con donna* (woman with woman), *marimacho* (butch), *medio hombre y mujer* (half man—half woman), *incuba* (partner who lies on top), *succuba* (partner who lies underneath), *subigatrice* (dominator, or one who bounces up and down), and *bellaca baldresera* (dildo-wearing scoundrel), as well as "tribade," "fricatrice," "rubster," "Sahacat," "Lesbian" (and other references to Sappho and Lesbos), and "hermaphrodite."⁷ The descriptions included *amistades particulares* (special friendships), "fruitless love," "love without reward," "not the marrying type," "like man and woman," and "making themselves into 'roosters'" as well as other allusions to both specific sexual acts and general feelings of passion and attraction.

As critics establish their approaches to "naming" that which must not be named—which writers in the past therefore referred to as *peccatum mutum* (the silent sin)—there is continued debate over issues of visibility and tolerance of eroticism between women in the early modern period. In what Valerie Traub refers to as "practicing impossibilities," the proliferation of images depicting female homoeroticism in the Renaissance belies the rhetoric that seeks to minimize the presence or impact of passion between women. Some scholars, such as Emma Donoghue, therefore question conclusions about the presumed silence and invisibility of passion between women: "These seventeenth- and eighteenth-century words do not seem to refer only to isolated sexual acts, as is often claimed, but to the emotions, desires, styles, tastes and behavioral tendencies that can make up an identity. . . . [Eroticism between women] was neither so silent and invisible as some have assumed, nor as widely tolerated as others have claimed" (*Passions*, 3, 7). Other researchers, such as Winfried Schleiner, maintain that early modern "personal or fictional reports of such [female same-sex relations] are few" (245).

As a study with a broad selection of texts that address multiple and diverse types of friendships and relationships, as well as sexual and erotic liaisons between women of different social classes and very diverse domestic and local circumstances, *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain* seeks to show that the frequent representations of eroticism between women—both erotic/platonic and sexual/genital—were visible to all types of cultural consumers.

These included the fans of popular secular entertainment and the readers of religious works penned by nuns, confessors, and Inquisitional officials, as well as the curious neighbors and bystanders who participated in the gossipy oral transmission of information about local same-sex relationships. At times these narratives described complex personal relationships, occasionally characterizing these women as being of a certain “type” or as behaving in a manner that would eventually be recognized as the manifestation of a divergent lesbian, bisexual, or transgender identity. There are even some texts in which sexually deviant women chose not to live as women and hence did not necessarily perceive their desire as *homoerotic*.

Most studies of lesbians in the early modern period address the common assumption that desire between women during this time was invisible, impossible, silenced, minimized, or merely ignored. Yet a more in-depth examination of the various discourses of the time tells a different story. It is highly revealing that scholars specializing in the history of sexuality argue that early modern Spanish legislators were Europe’s leading experts on lesbian relations. Historian Louis Crompton, for example, makes the telling observation that “the Spanish seem to have been preeminent in Renaissance Europe as specialists on the subject of lesbianism and the law” (“Myth,” 18). If Spanish lawmakers were becoming authorities in defining and legislating what they considered illicit female desire, it is only because multiple discourses were busy depicting, intimating, and censoring just such nonnormative activity.

Literary texts of the period reveal a very wide range of nonheterosexual behavior among women, including the “situational homosexuality” (momentary sexual encounters between women explained by the absence of a male sexual partner) that is often interpreted as an exploratory entryway into same-sex desire. A runaway best seller during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain, the novel in dialogue known as *La Celestina* included a salacious scene between the old bawd Celestina and a young prostitute. According to the number of editions and reprints, the third most popular fictional book was a pastoral novel known as *La Diana*, in which the author reveled in describing two women enjoying a night of passionate flirting, hugging, and sensual romance. Even the popular chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanc* (described by one of Cervantes’s characters in *Don Quixote* as the “best book in the world”) did not shy away from the idea of same-sex fondling and genital contact between women. The best-selling author María de Zayas explored female homoeroticism in her novellas. Theatergoers could cite a long list of plays that included same-sex attraction between women. Cross-dressing was common on the stage, but some playwrights portrayed lesbian desire without any tricks.

Historical texts of the period reveal captivating cases of eroticism and

intimacy between women. Remarkable is the fact that some of the early modern women who were believed to have loved other women became popular celebrities. The Lieutenant Nun, Catalina de Erauso, successfully passed as a man for decades, distinguishing herself on the battlefield in Chile and Peru and only later in life revealing her female anatomy. Once the secret was out, King Philip IV of Spain granted her a soldier's pension, and Pope Urban VIII granted her a dispensation so she could continue to live as a man. Erauso achieved this success and approval despite the highly publicized accounts of her romantic trysts with other women in the New World.

Not surprisingly, not all lesbians received such popular acceptance. Erauso became a celebrated national hero, but the multiethnic and biracial (and possibly intersexed) Elena/Eleno de Céspedes was charged by the Inquisition with female sodomy and found guilty of bigamy as well as collusion with the devil. Despite this hardship, she gained celebrity status among many followers as an exceptional female healer.

Theological, scientific, and legal specialists also wrote about female same-sex erotic activity. Some of the most compelling accounts of women who loved other women can be found in documents associated with all-female communities, such as correctional homes, prisons for wayward women, and convents. Saint Teresa of Avila, undoubtedly the most influential and widely read religious woman of the early modern period in Spain and the New World, wrote extensively on the dangerous "particular friendships" that could easily develop into erotic relationships in cloistered communities. Evidence of concern about these intimate relationships is found in numerous letters between nuns, in life narratives (such as the account by Ana de San Agustín), and in convent rules and regulations, as well as in theological treatises circulated and printed during this time in Spain and colonial Latin America. As might be expected, the legal discourse was concerned primarily with interpreting, legislating, discouraging, and punishing specific sex acts. Yet court documents from this era reveal a complex picture of same-sex relations, with surprisingly detailed records about the emotions, seductions, courtships, and other personal aspects of the cases that became public.

Given the potential wealth of information on desire between women, we might question why some early modern texts highlight the topic of female homoeroticism but silence the particular sex acts that were of such concern for moralists and jurists. Perhaps one answer is provided by Ludovico Maria Sinistrari in his 1700 commentary on female sodomy: "More than once I have consulted very learned men. . . . They all candidly confessed . . . that they were completely ignorant as to how it [female sodomy] can differ from the pollution, produced by rubbing their privy parts together" (Summers translation, 34; emphasis mine).

In his explicit description of sex acts between women, Sinistrari accuses other theologians of being ignorant and confused about same-sex female genital activity, which might explain the reticence of other ecclesiastics to discuss sexual specifics. Similarly, the silence or ambiguity in other narratives may have been motivated by a sense of modesty, on the part of confessors as well as the women who loved other women. While they were not practicing an early modern version of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” approach to female homoeroticism, confessors were expected to walk a fine line between discovering enough details to distinguish between sodomy and pollution and not soliciting too much information about these sensual relationships.

Related to perceived ignorance about lesbian sexuality is the hetero-centric bias that impedes a more nuanced understanding of the possibilities in same-sex eroticism. This is evident in the recurrent descriptions of sexual relations between women in terms of male-female relations. For example, in 1503, Catalina de Belunçe and Mariche de Oyarzún were described as “penetrating each other *like a man and a woman*, both nude, on top of each other, touching each other and kissing one another, both ‘riding’ each other, the one on top of the other’s nude belly, doing carnal acts that only a man should do to a woman. . . . They had completed and perpetrated this crime on numerous and diverse occasions” (quoted in Segura Graiño, 140; emphasis mine). Not only were the sexual relations between the two women described as “like a man and a woman,” but the purported recurrence of their encounters suggests a relationship that might have been long-term or perhaps more involved than just an isolated incident.

Another motivation for excluding specific details about how women might engage in sex acts together is the lesson they could otherwise provide to those not yet exposed to such possibilities. Saint Teresa, for example, encourages visiting priests who discover special friendships in the convent to keep the information secret (Weber, “Spiritual,” 135). Furthermore, when considering the kinds of representations in convent narratives that lead some readers to assume that these special friendships might be romantic but ultimately “chaste” (i.e., with no genital or physical contact), we should keep in mind that narrators (confessors and nuns) were particularly concerned about possible scandals affecting their convents and religious orders (as well as not wanting to incite more passion and desire through suggestion). For example, Alonso de San Jerónimo didn’t need the sexual particulars to recount his version of an illicit friendship between two nuns. Through his suggestive narrative, the reader is invited to imagine the scenes behind closed doors (82v).

As a result, the seemingly innocent depictions of same-sex love in certain texts (in light of an apparent absence of sexual details) create an important

body of evidence for how women who desired other women were perceived and identified, and in this way suggest that early modern observers were capable of imagining a broad set of identifying characteristics for women believed to enjoy the romantic company of other women. Through the numerous and varied texts that engage lesbian desire, we discover indications that early modern culture was making meaningful connections among behavior and the other features that add up to a recognizable identity category (anatomy, sexual and social preferences, emotions, reactions, life choices, and so forth). Much of these are part of an “untold story” in which fragments and glimpses are suggested, implied, imagined, and partially revealed. They require the kind of reading that observers and consumers have always done, in which they privilege or identify with certain moments that best speak to their needs and preferences, regardless of authorial intentions or even how the narratives end (i.e., with executions, exile, heterosexual marriages, or solitude). Through these stories, we also discover how discussions of female same-sex desire in early modern texts inevitably engage issues of gender expectations, anatomy and sex assignment, class, race, ethnicity, and the politics of religion and empire.

Chapter 2 of this book (“Legal, Medical, and Religious Approaches to Lesbians in Early Modern Spain”) analyzes nonnormative female sexuality in juridical, medical, and theological texts in order to show how scientific, religious, and secular legal authorities treated this nontraditional desire. The texts they produced demonstrate a high level of awareness of the variety among practitioners of same-sex love between women. After a brief overview of medieval and early modern legal references to female homoeroticism, I examine scientific and medical explanations for female homosexuality such as the best-selling *Examen* (1575), by physician Juan Huarte de San Juan, a 1603 gynecological treatise by Rodrigo de Castro, anatomical treatises by Juan Valverde de Amusco and Thomas Bartholin, and the pseudo-scientific Inquisitional theology of Sinistrari, as well as sixteenth- and seventeenth-century confessional manuals and secular legal codes.

In Chapter 3 (“Criminal Lesbians”), I examine both secular and Inquisitional court cases brought against women believed to love other women, as well as the role that same-sex relations played in the criminal worlds of witchcraft, prostitution, and women’s disciplinary institutions. The cases against Catalina de Belunçe, Inés de Santa Cruz, and Catalina Ledesma reveal significant insights about collective fantasies and perceptions about the sexual and personal relationships between the female defendants. The Inquisition’s case against a widow named Ana Aler and her purported lover Mariana López in mid-seventeenth-century Aragón provides further evidence about how long-term or significant relationships between women were

imagined, interpreted, and critiqued by acquaintances, friends, and family as well as by legal specialists.

Evidence of female same-sex activity in the secluded confines of disciplinary institutions such as Magdalene houses and women's prisons also revealed the role that sorcery and prostitution played in the history of sexual relations between women. For example, in 1597 the Inquisition of Mallorca found the thirty-year-old unmarried woman Esperanza de Rojas guilty of blasphemy and other heretical activities. According to the tribunal, while a resident at the "House of Piety" (a correctional home for delinquent women), Rojas had created an altar to pray to the devil while she practiced love magic in hopes that the two women with whom she had already had sexual relations in the home would resume the affairs once again. This case (as well as those of other women in correctional institutions) provides compelling proof of the complexity of same-sex desire in areas not immediately associated with lesbianism. At first glance, Rojas's "lesbian" case seems to deviate from the heterocentric discourse that dominated most early modern works on witchcraft, magic, and female criminality. But more careful consideration of Rojas's case (which was filtered through the Inquisitional narrative), as well as of the fictional and historical texts on demonology, witches, and female sexual deviance in circulation at that time, reveals that Rojas was not the first witch or prisoner who desired other women. The documentation of Rojas's case helps reveal a history of lesbian sexuality that has been frequently ignored in studies on early modern witchcraft, magic, and demonology. To understand better the dynamics among prostitution, sorcery and magic, female criminality, and lesbian desire, I analyze documents related to female correctional homes and prisons, specific cases (such as that of Esperanza de Rojas) involving sexual relations between residents, and treatises on demonology and prostitution that discuss attraction between women. I also analyze a best-selling work of fiction, *La Celestina*, and other narratives of *pícaras* (female rogues) in terms of their treatment of these interrelated themes.

Chapter 4 ("Transgender Lesbian Celebrities") explores the cultural context in which royal and religious authorities and the general public celebrated popular figures associated with lesbian desire, nontraditional gender roles, and contested or ambiguous sexual anatomy. Here I examine the intriguing case of Catalina de Erauso (1592–1650), a Basque noblewoman who, dressed in men's clothing, lived successfully as a man for almost twenty years, briefly in Spain and later in the New World. Even with publicized episodes of same-sex eroticism (included in her autobiography, news pamphlets, letters, and on center stage in a popular play by Juan Pérez de Montalbán), the celebrity icon known as the Lieutenant Nun was rewarded by the

Spanish monarch Philip IV with a soldier's pension for her distinguished military service in Peru and Chile. She also received dispensation from Pope Urban VIII to continue dressing in men's clothing. Despite the fact that Erauso lived as a man for most of "her" life, all early modern texts render her as a woman and her desire same-sex. I also study the case of the gender-bending, sexually deviant Queen Christina of Sweden, who became a favorite topic in Spanish news, gossip, and popular theater.⁸

While the fame of Erauso and Queen Christina seemed to eclipse these open secrets, the sexual practices and preferences of less privileged women made them the focus of public attention. Born female in the mid-sixteenth century to an African slave and a Castilian peasant, Elena de Céspedes married a man and gave birth to a son. But soon after her husband abandoned the marriage, Céspedes began living as a man (using the name Eleno de Céspedes), because of what she or he described as a sudden onset of hermaphroditism. With medical confirmation of his or her male identity, Céspedes married María del Caño, but civic and religious authorities later charged "her" with female sodomy and eventually convicted her of bigamy and demonic collusion. She received a sentence of two hundred public lashes and ten years of confined service in a local hospital. Despite the criminal proceedings, Céspedes became a popular celebrity and was cited in various medical and cultural documents such as Jerónimo de Huerta's 1599 annotated translation of Pliny's *Natural History* (as a transgendered mulatta criminal lesbian) and Antonio de Fuentelapeña's 1676 *El ente dilucidado*. I will use the divergent cases of these historical "lesbian celebrities" to show the different ways that such women came to the attention of the public and remained in the public eye. As their cases reveal, early modern conceptions of female homoeroticism dealt just as much with race, ethnicity, imperialism, religious authority, and the mutable body as they did with specific sexual behaviors.

Chapter 5 ("Special Friendships in the Convent") opens with an exploration of the official *reglas y constituciones* (rules and regulations) that each religious order drafted, circulated, and taught to the novices and professed nuns, and the ways they treated intimacy between women in the convent. Following the medieval and early modern tradition of prohibiting "excessive" attachments in the cloistered community, Saint Teresa wrote extensively on *amistades particulares* in many of her most influential works. In *Camino de perfección*, for example, Teresa described excessive affection, attachments, and same-sex desire in the convent as "poison" and "pestilence"; in the *Constituciones*, the author advised that "no sister must embrace another, or touch her face or hands, and there must be no special friendships among them"; and in the *Modo de visitar los conventos*, Teresa described the "particular

friendship” between a prioress and a favored nun as dangerous and fertile ground for the devil to tempt weak souls to sin. Regardless of the “natural” condition of this special affection, religious authorities maintained that these exclusive attachments needed to be repressed in order to avoid the negative consequences for communal living (such as resentments, factionalism, favoritism, gossip, distraction from spiritual purpose, scandal, and so forth). Through her exposition of what *not* to do, Teresa provided her readers a glimpse into the nature of same-sex desire in the convent, albeit from the perspective of a (self-professed) third-party witness.

The impact that Teresa’s writings had on generations of women in Spain and colonial Latin America cannot be overstated. When recounting childhood readings and spiritual meditations in the convent, early modern nuns emphasized the importance of her written work. Despite the fact that every nun had been warned against allowing passions for other nuns to develop (a lesson learned either through their reading of the convent rules and regulations, Saint Teresa’s words, or other admonitions by confessors and theologians), female homoeroticism can be found in their letters, life narratives, drama, and poetry. I analyze the spiritual writings of other nuns in Spain and the New World, including those of María de San José (Salazar), Ana de San Bartolomé, Ana de San Agustín, Ana de Jesús, María de Jesús, Francisca Josefa de la Concepción de Castillo, and María Josefa Ildefonsa de San Juan Bautist. I discuss the theater of Marcela de San Felix (daughter of the famed playwright Lope de Vega); the written correspondence between Ana de Jesús and Beatriz de la Concepción, Ana de San Bartolomé and Leonor de San Bernardo, and Ana de San Bartolomé and Ana de la Ascensión; and the doctrinal works of ecclesiastics such as Bernardino de Villegas, Antonio de Arbiol, Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, Francisco Aguiar y Seijas, and Andrés de Borda. I also look at the Inquisitional trial of Fray Juan Ibáñez for encouraging Sor Agustina del Corazón de Jesús to engage in sex play with another nun.

Chapter 6 (“Lesbian Desire on Center Stage”) focuses on how authors represented same-sex relations between women in best-selling fictional works. Like the commercially successful *La Celestina*, some of the most popular fictional texts of the early modern period featured scenes of attraction, flirtation, and romance between women. The pastoral novel *La Diana* (first published in 1559), which had more printings during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries than Cervantes’s masterpiece *Don Quixote*, reveals the transgressive nature of Selvagia’s love for Ismenia in book 1. Similar scenes appeared in popular works such as *El Crotalón*, *Orlando furioso*, *El sueño de la viuda*, and *Tirant lo Blanc*. I explore the complex relationship between same-sex love scenes and reader response as it informs the

possible impact of homoerotic scenes on various readers, such as young women readers and their parents, ecclesiastics, and other male readers. While most literary works were penned by men, the best-selling author María de Zayas featured lesbian desire in two of her novellas, “Amar sólo por vencer” and “La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor.” Despite their consistent defense of same-sex love between women, we might also read these stories as normative within dominant discourses, since they at least initially appear to be based on patriarchal constructions of female homoeroticism rather than on transgressive expressions of lesbian subjectivity. Nonetheless, an analysis of how Zayas’s texts portray female homoeroticism compared with their depiction of male homosexuality leads the reader to reconsider the “normative” function of same-sex desire in the works.

Popular theater also proved to be fertile ground for viewing female homoeroticism. While the economic success of actresses dressed as men provided ample opportunities for moments of nonnormative desire, such scenes inevitably created queer images for the spectators not fooled by the unconvincing disguises in plays such as *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*, *El caballero dama*, and *La serrana de la Vera*. Like the consistent criticism of prose works such as *La Celestina* and *La Diana*, the moralists were equally concerned about the impact that “lascivious” performances could have on impressionable spectators.

At least one play I study features same-sex love without recourse to disguise or deception: Cubillo de Aragón’s *Añasco el de Talavera* (written around 1637). In Cubillo’s play, Leonor is well aware of Dionisia’s love for her, and their friends and family discuss the erotic situation openly. Of course, the girl does not get the girl in the end, but the orthodox heterosexual resolution fails to erase the explicit and sincere declarations of lesbian passion acted out earlier on center stage.

The final chapter (“Looking Like a Lesbian”) concludes this study by exploring the role of speculation and the “outing” of nonheterosexual desire during the early modern period. How did early modern observers imagine lesbians and speculate about women whose lives invited conjecture about their romantic preferences? Through a review of biographical materials and pornographic texts, this section also “outs” the inconsistencies and contradictions in how early modern society and subsequent scholars have viewed women believed to love other women.

Whether on stage, the page, or in the streets, lesbian desire was in the limelight in the early modern Spanish empire. Female homoeroticism took on multiple purposes and meanings that ranged from heterobiased titillation to precursors of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identities that were dependent on conceptions of gender, anatomy, class, race, ethnicity, religion,

and empire. Indeed, some producers of female same-sex images not intended for female viewers, readers, or listeners may have *underestimated* the impact on those consumers less interested in normative desire (those who practice “cross-viewing” or “cross-identifying”); that is, images intended as pornography for men may inspire passion in women as well. Nonetheless, there is ample evidence that many moralists were aware of the corrupting potential of lesbian imagery. Despite varying degrees of concern about same-sex passion between women, some representations (such as those that privileged sex-at-birth in transgender and transsexual cases) actually *created* a lesbian image or identity where the desiring individual could articulate “his” desire for a woman not as *homosexual* but rather *heterosexual*.

2

Legal, Medical, and Religious Approaches to Lesbians in Early Modern Spain

Many medieval theologians had something to say about Saint Paul's condemnation of women who "exchanged natural relations for unnatural" (Romans 1:26). Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Anselm, and Peter Abelard were only a few of the renowned church fathers to add their own fearful commentaries to Saint Paul's abhorrence of women's same-sex inclinations, whether in practice or in the realm of the imagination.¹ In *Summa Theologiae*, Saint Thomas Aquinas places female sodomy firmly under the category of homosexuality when referring to different types of unnatural vice: "Third, with a person of the same sex, male with male and female with female, to which the Apostle refers [Romans 1:26], and this is called sodomy" (245).² A few decades later, in the early fourteenth century, Cino da Pistoia interpreted the Roman imperial edict of AD 287 (*lex foedissimam*) as a condemnation that included "when a woman suffers defilement in surrendering to another woman. For there are certain women, inclined to foul wickedness, who exercise their lust on other women and pursue them like men" (translation quoted in Brown, *Immodest*, 9). In his *Lectures* of 1400, Bartholomaeus de Saliceto recommends the death penalty for female sodomy (Crompton, "Myth," 15). Saliceto's arguments were, in turn, referenced frequently until the eighteenth century.

There is ample legal, religious, and medical evidence that sodomy was the sexual behavior, the sin, and the crime that provoked the greatest horror and scandal in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain. Sodomy laws in Spain during that time reflected an increasing intolerance of unconventional or unorthodox sexual practices (Heise, 363). Before the late fifteenth century, punishment for sodomy in Spain had been castration and suspension. Arguing that these forms of punishment had not been effective enough to eliminate the monstrous practice from their midst, the Catholic monarchs

Ferdinand and Isabella issued new punishments that they hoped would be more fitting to the crime:

And because the penalties previously decreed have not sufficed to eradicate and definitively punish such an abominable crime, . . . and because the laws previously passed have not provided a sufficient remedy, we establish and order that any person of any estate, condition, pre-eminence, or dignity who commits the wicked crime against nature, being convicted by that manner of proof that according to the law is sufficient for proving the crime of heresy or treason, shall be burned at the stake in the place [town] . . . and similarly shall lose his movable and landed property. (translation quoted in Cowans, 202)³

The monarchy also facilitated Inquisitional involvement by linking the crime of heresy to that of sodomy in the royal decrees of 1497. Furthermore, they agreed to relax the evidence needed for conviction in order to ensure the capture and punishment of all potential guilty parties: "And to better avoid said crime, we order that if it should happen that it is not possible to prove said crime with perfect and complete evidence, but if very close and related acts can be found out and proven . . . the delinquent shall be considered truly guilty of said crime, and shall be judged and sentenced and suffer the same penalty as those convicted by perfect evidence" (translation quoted in Cowans, 202).⁴ Soon afterward, in a 1524 papal brief, Clement VII gave the Inquisitional courts in Aragón jurisdiction over sodomy investigations, regardless of the presence or absence of heresy in such cases (Kamen, 207–8).

While the increased severity toward sodomites seemed concerned primarily with punishing men (evident by the sharp rise in the number of prosecutions of male sodomites during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), the 1532 edict issued by Holy Roman Emperor Charles V confirmed that women were to be included in legal applications of sodomy laws: "If anyone commits impurity with a beast, or a man with a man, or a woman with a woman, they have forfeited their lives and shall, after the common custom, be sentenced to death by burning" (translation quoted in Crompton, "Myth," 18). Likewise, Gregorio López's 1555 gloss on the medieval legal code *Las siete partidas* specified that women are subject to the sodomy law that prescribed the death penalty for those found guilty of the crime: "The same crime [sodomy] can be committed by women. . . . The women who commit said crime should be thrown into the fire, according to the royal decree of the Catholic kings" (329).⁵ However, as historian Louis Crompton reminds us, López's gloss also mentions other views on female sodomy, such as the com-

paratively more tolerant opinion of "Abulensis" (believed to be Alonso To-stado, Bishop of Avila, who died in 1455) ("Myth," 19). López reiterates Abulensis's belief that sexual acts between women were not as "heinous" as male sodomy since "the union of two women . . . does not result in pollution but only the disorder of their desire and the eagerness with which they submit to lasciviousness. . . . Accordingly, when sentencing, the most benign interpretation should be used and perhaps burning should not be applied to women but rather a lesser sentence than the death penalty" (López, 330).⁶ López was not inclined to condone the behavior of women who liked women too much, however: "Although there is no specific punishment especially for women who commit the aforementioned crime, nonetheless they should be punished with a grave sentence for such extreme shamelessness" (330).⁷

In this atmosphere of confusion, early modern jurists and theologians directed their attention to determining whether one (or both) of the women used an instrument or artificial penis during sexual relations. In the mid-sixteenth century, jurist Antonio Gómez argued that "if any woman acts the part of a man with another woman . . . both are said to commit the crime of Sodom against nature and must be punished with the prescribed penalty" (translation quoted in Crompton, "Myth," 19). Gómez stipulated that if a woman has sexual relations with another woman by means of any material instrument, then they both must be burned, but if a woman has sexual relations with another woman without a penis substitute, then a lighter penalty could be considered (*ibid.*). Gómez cited the cases of two Spanish nuns burned for using material instruments, whereas two women in Granada who had not used an artificial male member were only whipped and sent to the galleys (see Tomás y Valiente, 46–49).

MEDICAL VIEWS OF FEMALE HOMOEROTICISM

Given their enormous influence on Renaissance thinkers, the scientific theories of the classical Greek and Roman tradition had a decisive impact on the early modern medical texts that address sexual practices between women. In one curious treatise, attributed to Galen and titled "On the Secrets of Women," the author provides detailed aphrodisiac and anti-aphrodisiac recipes for lesbian desire. Under the subtitle "Drugs which make women detest lesbianism even if they madly lust for it," we read,

Burnt copper, burnt vitriol, white vitriol, green vitriol, blue vitriol, glass, merlin, gallnut, pomegranate rind, marcasite, and sweet hoof. Two mith-quals of each simple are taken, pulverized, and kneaded with rose fat obtained by using olive oil. The woman should carry this mixture within

her vagina continuously for five days during which her menstruation is not expected. She should not remove it except when she has to void. In that case, another quantity of the compound should be placed instead of the old one. Also the quantity should not be more or less than the two mithquals. (translation quoted in Levey and Souryal, 210)

Conversely, the aphrodisiac recipe for desire between women promises to “make lesbianism so desirable to women that they would keep busy with it and passionately lust for it forgetting all about their work” (211). Furthermore, the text claims that the woman employing the concoction would need to be tricked into doing so, thus implying that the same-sex relations would not normally be consensual: “The woman is tricked into carrying this dirham weight [of drugs] so that it will lead to the described situation of excitement and passion for six months” (211). The implied but not visible figure in this section is the predatory lesbian who employs chemistry to force her love interest into same-sex relations against her will. Interestingly, the anti-aphrodisiac recipe does not mention any trickery needed to make a woman “detest lesbianism even if they madly lust for it,” suggesting that the drug could be used for any degree of same-sex passion (such as that of women who are already highly attracted to other women, as well as preventing it in those who are unaware of such desire).⁸

When the eleventh-century Arab physician Avicenna discusses female sexual pleasure in his *Canon on Medicine*, he suggests that women who are unsupervised are likely to turn to masturbation or same-sex relations as an alternative to heterosexual activities, especially when they are unable to achieve sexual satisfaction with a man: “Sexual pleasure promotes rapid emission of sperm; but women in many cases are slow to emit sperm, and their desire remains unsatisfied, and for this reason there is no pregnancy. These women remain unsatisfied, and for this reason, those who are not supervised will lie beneath whomever they can impose upon, and for this cause they resort to rubbing so that they may achieve what their desire lacks by using what comes between them” (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 130). Referring to Avicenna’s use of the ambiguous term “whomever,” Kenneth Borris comments that the author “may mean that sexually unsatisfied women will either copulate with any available man, or mutually masturbate with a woman, or both” (*Same-Sex*, 390n50).

A prominent scholar of medicine, philosophy, and rabbinical topics, Maimonides (born in Córdoba in 1135) was fully acquainted with Galen, and his *Treatise on Cohabitation* bears the unmistakable imprint of Galen’s influence. The recipes for aphrodisiacs outlined in Maimonides’s late twelfth-century *Treatise on Cohabitation* closely resemble those included in the Ga-

lenic "On the Secrets of Women." While Galen's text was written explicitly to help increase the "sexual potential and coital activities" of the Sultan of Hamat, the omission of lesbian aphrodisiac and anti-aphrodisiac recipes in Maimonides might not be surprising after reviewing his other writings on sexual ethics (Rosner, ix). In the fifth book of Maimonides's codification of ancient Jewish law and ritual, the author outlines the prohibition of same-sex relations while suggesting the need for punitive measures to discourage such behavior:

Women are forbidden to engage in lesbian practices with one another, these being *the doings of the land of Egypt* (Lev. 18:3), against which we have been warned, as it is said, *After the doings of the land of Egypt . . . ye shall not do* (ibid.). Our Sages have said, "What did they do? A man would marry a man, or a woman a woman, or a woman would marry two men." Although such an act is forbidden, the perpetrators are not liable to a flogging, since there is no specific negative commandment prohibiting it, nor is actual intercourse of any kind involved here. . . . It behooves the court, however, to administer the flogging prescribed for disobedience, since they have performed a forbidden act. (translation quoted in Rosner, 101)

In his *Commentary on the Mishnah* (finished in 1168), Maimonides reiterates the disparaging commentary on forbidden unions such as lesbian affairs that had appeared in his *Book of Holiness*: "The abominable practice of lesbianism between women who lie one with the other is a disgraceful practice. However, there is no punishment therefore, either Biblical or Rabbinic. . . . These are women which the Sages have called *mesoleloth* (lesbians), from the word *maslol*, which is the manner of practicing lewdness one with the other" (translation quoted in Rosner, 119–20).

The topic of lesbianism also appeared in Hispano-Arabic philosophical treatises. The prominent theorist of love Ibn Hazm (born in Córdoba in 994) mentions (disparagingly) a woman who bestowed her affection on another woman in his treatise *The Dove's Neck Ring about Love and Lovers*, while other Islamic works such as *The Book of Hind* and the lost *Treatise on Lesbianism* were less condemnatory of love between women (Crompton, "Male Love," 150–51; see also Rowson). On the other hand, some scholars note that male-authored works (such as two eleventh-century Arabic philosophical texts written by al-Jurjani and al-Raghib) interpret sexual relations between women as well as female masturbation in terms of a willful dismissal of men and of penetrative sex: "A description of tribades' aversion to phallic objects and other things that remind them of men suggests that, from

a man's perspective, the essence of the phenomenon is a rejection of males in general, and thus of penetration" (Rowson, 68).

Referred to by some as "the Andalusian Sappho," the eleventh-century Walladah (also from Córdoba) wrote love poetry for her beloved Mohja (Muhjah). Nonetheless, as As'ad AbuKhalil asserts, Walladah's romantic poems for Muhjah have disappeared "because most authors refused to cite them due to their explicit sexual language" (quoted in Stephen O. Murray, "Woman-Woman," 99). While not all scholars have been so decisive about Wallada's sexuality, her story serves as an "important reminder that same-sex desire between women in the urban, courtly Islamicate literary world was far from absent" (Amer, 23).

Translated into Spanish from Arabic or Hebrew, the late fourteenth-century or early fifteenth-century treatise titled *Speculum al joder* (*The Mirror of Coitus*) is believed by some to be little known in the Western tradition due to the nature of its sexual-medical advice (Vicens, 9).⁹ While *Speculum al joder* is predominantly concerned with heterosexual eroticism (and therefore assumed to have been written for men), it does mention certain women who are not sexually fulfilled—either because they don't have access to men or because copulation with men is unrewarding—and therefore use a penis substitute referred to as a *gedoma* (dildo): "You should know that ardent women who enjoy orgasm so much but are unable to do it with men, they use a dildo, which is made of soft leather and cotton, and formed in the shape of a penis: they insert this into their vagina until their desire is satisfied" (Vicens, 54).¹⁰ Although *Speculum al joder* does not mention same-sex relations directly, the ambiguity of the text allows for the possibility of female-female sex acts. Given that lesbian relations were frequently conflated with masturbation in penitentials and in confessors' manuals, it is not surprising that the vague reference in this text allows for either or both readings.

During this era scientists were exploring possible links between transgressive sex acts and distinctive physical appearance. Early modern chiromancy (palmistry) and physiognomy (the science of interpreting bodily features as signs of personal characteristics) posited that same-sex lovers (both male and female) displayed bodily signs that could distinguish them from other individuals (see Borris, "Sodomizing," 139). For instance, Bartolommeo della Rocca (commonly known as "Cocles") described in his 1504 *Rebirth of Chiromancy and Physiognomy* that the hands of tribades were different from those of other women:

It should be known that the qualities of a subject's hand are found to differ in two ways, depending on the subject. As a result, if signs of sodomy [*pedicationis*] are found in a female subject, there should be

another indication of the deviation of the sex. . . . Note also that in women “morally offensive lust” can be understood when women come together vulva to vulva and rub one another, of which Juvenal writes in this verse: “They ride one another, turn and turn about, and disport themselves for the Moon to witness.” And such women are called by the ancient term *tribades*. It is said that Sappho, the Lesbian lass and poet, amused herself with this kind of lust. (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 185–86)¹¹

A fundamental ancient source for Renaissance astrology was Claudius Ptolemy, whose *Tetrabiblos* was first published in 1484 and reprinted several times during the sixteenth century. Ptolemy’s work identifies horoscopes that engender various types of tribades: “But if likewise Mars or Venus as well, either one or both of them, is made masculine, . . . the females are lustful for unnatural congresses, cast inviting glances of the eye, and are what we call *tribades*; for they deal with females and perform the functions of males” (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 167–68). Similarly, Julius Firmicus’s *Mathesis* (Learning) was first printed in 1497 and became one of the central Renaissance authorities on the subject. Firmicus proposed that a particular arrangement of planets in masculine signs created viragos, masculine women, and tribades: “If Saturn is in opposition, in square aspect, or conjunction with Venus, located as we have said with Mars, women who have this combination make love [impurely and] unchastely to other women [due to lust]. . . . If the Sun and Moon are in masculine signs and Venus is also in a masculine sign in a woman’s chart, women will be born who take on a man’s character and desire intercourse with women like men” (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 171 and 173).

While astrologists recognized and conceptualized individuals characterized by a variety of same-sex inclinations, the Spanish physician Juan Huarte de San Juan (1529–1588) explored the relationships among physiology, psychology, and sexuality in his best-selling scientific treatise *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (The Examination of Wits for the Sciences), first printed in 1575.¹² Between 1575 and 1594, seven different editions of Huarte’s text were printed in Spain. By the early seventeenth century, the treatise had been translated into French, Italian, English, Dutch, and German, thus becoming a best seller throughout Europe (Serés, 108–22). Like the works of other Renaissance scientists, Huarte’s doctrine draws heavily on ancient medicine and the classical theory of bodily and phlegmatic humors, frequently citing Aristotle, Galen, and Hippocrates as sources for his conclusions on the body’s humors. In his popular and accessible medical text (published in Spanish as opposed to Latin), Huarte offers a medical expla-

nation for individuals whose behavior, appearance, and sexual practices do not correspond to the traditional expectations for their biologically assigned sex-at-birth. According to Huarte, masculine women and feminine men (who were inclined to practice sodomy) were originally destined to be born of the opposite sex, but the temperature of the bodily humors changed during gestation and caused the genitals to “transmute” before birth:

Many times Nature has made a female and, having been in the mother's womb for one or two months, for some reason her genitals are overcome with heat and they come out and a male is created. To whom this transmutation occurs in the mother's womb, it is clearly recognizable later by certain movements he has that are indecent for men: woman-like, effeminate, soft and mild of voice; and such men are inclined to behave like a woman and they frequently fall prey to the sin of sodomy. On the other hand, often Nature has made a male with his genitals on the outside, and with an onset of coldness, they are transformed to the inside and a female is created. She is recognized after birth as having a masculine nature, in her speech as well as in all her movements and behavior. This may seem difficult to prove, but considering that many authentic historians affirm its truth, it is easy to believe. (608–9)

Referring to this passage by Huarte, Louis Crompton concludes that the early modern physician outlined “the origin of lesbianism” in terms of a heterosexual man trapped in the body of a female: “Cold can cause the genitals of a male fetus to turn inward, creating a child that is then taken for female while remaining psychologically male, that is, she behaves like a man and desires other women” (*Homosexuality*, 303). According to early modern medical theory, then, lesbians were biologically linked to masculine identity since they had been, in fact, identified as male in the womb before the sexual transmutation occurred.

With his essentialist theory, Huarte not only concludes that biology determines gender behavior (speech, movements, and actions), transgressive sexual practices, and anatomical sex assignment, but he also specifies three different levels of the bodily “fluids” that determine physiological and behavioral characteristics. Although all women are composed of cold and moist liquids, not all have the same level of these humors. For women, these levels are assessed by observing different categories such as intellectual capacity, habits and behavior, voice timbre, body fat and musculature, coloring, facial hair, and physical beauty or ugliness (613–17). According to Huarte's classifications, if a woman has the lowest level of coldness and humidity, she is likely to be more intelligent, but such a woman is also more disagreeable and

has an aggressive and conflictive personality (614–16). Likewise, since a strong, deep voice is common to the hot, dry nature of men, a woman with a “masculine” voice also has the lowest level of coldness and humidity, as do women with dark hair and complexion (616–17). Not surprisingly, women who have substantial facial hair show signs of low levels of coldness and moisture and, according to Huarte, are rarely beautiful (617). Women with more body fat were thought to possess high levels of coldness and humidity, but strong and muscular women with little body fat possess low levels of the “feminine fluids” (616–17).

Huarte summarizes this theory on masculine women and feminine men by speculating on their coupling and their chances for procreation: “The woman with low levels of coldness and moisture, whom we noted as being characteristically bossy, ill-tempered, deep-voiced, muscular, olive-skinned, hairy, and ugly, this woman will easily get pregnant from a man who is foolish, good-natured, soft-spoken, chubby, and with soft, white skin and little body hair” (624), despite the fact that the author also claims that such men are “unfit to procreate. These men are not very fond of women nor are women of them” (622).

As both Valerie Traub and Katharine Park have argued, the Renaissance (re)discovery of the clitoris by anatomists had a decisive impact on how female pleasure was interpreted during the early modern period.¹³ Thomas Bartholin’s English translation and revision of his father’s treatise on anatomy, for example, links the hypertrophied clitoris with tribadism

because it hath somewhat like the Nut and Fore-skin of a Mans Yard, and in some Women it grows as big as the Yard of a man; so that some women abuse the same, and make use thereof in place of a mans Yard, exercising carnal Copulation one with another, and they are termed *Confriatrices* Rubsters. Which lascivious Practice is said to have been invented by *Philanis* and *Sappho*. The Greek Poetress, is reported to have practiced the same. And of these I conceive the Apostle *Paul* speaks in the I. of *Romans* 26. And therefore this part is called *Contemptus viorum* the Contempt of Mankind. Now the clitoris is a small Production. . . . In some it hangs out like a mans Yard, namely when young Wenches do frequently and continually handle and rub the same, as Examples testifie. But that it should grow as big as a Gooses neck, as *Platerus* relates of one, is altogether praeternatural and monstrous. *Tulpius* hath a like Story of one that had it as long as half a mans finger and as thick as a Boys Prick, which made her willing to have to do with Women in a Carnal way. But the more the part increases, the more does it hinder a man in his business. (76–77)

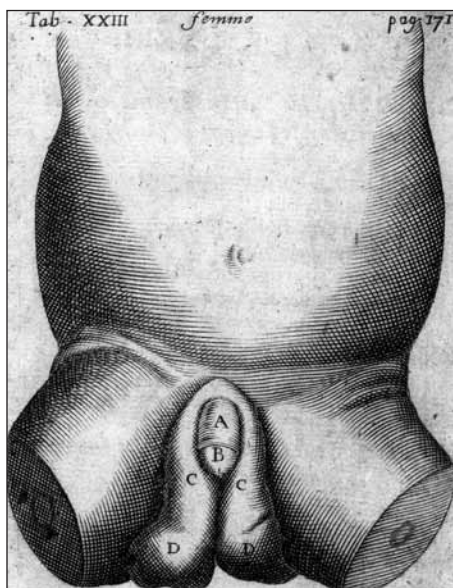


Figure 1. The hypertrophied clitoris in Reinier Graaf's *De mulierum*. (Courtesy of the University of Southern California, Doheny Library Special Collections.)

The textual “lesbianization” of the hypertrophied clitoris in early modern anatomies was frequently accompanied by illustrations that added another layer to how the reader or viewer might interpret women’s sexual pleasure outside the bounds of heterosexuality. Like many other anatomies, Bartholin’s text included an illustration of the clitoris on the same page as his discourse on tribadism. Similarly, Dutch physician Reinier Graaf’s 1672 treatise on female reproductive anatomy, *De mulierum organis generationi inservientibus* (On Female Organs of Generation), explains the lesbian potential of the “tribade” and “fricatricum” (rubsters with monstrous clitorises), citing ancient and modern sources that include the Spanish Leo Africanus (Graaf, 20–21). In the text accompanying one of Graaf’s own illustrations, the hypertrophied clitoris (labeled “A” in Figure 1) is described as “the clitoris that perfectly depicts the form of a man’s penis” (304–5), and consequently implies the penetrative potential of the plus-sized female genitalia.

Other treatises suggest homoeroticism or autoeroticism through the visual text but silence explicit discussion of same-sex possibilities in their verbal text. The sixteenth-century Spanish physician Juan Valverde de Amusco, for example, published a highly popular yet controversial anatomy in 1556 (*Historia de la composición del cuerpo humano* [History of the Composition of the Human Body]) that reproduces many of the engravings from Andreas Vesalius’s *De humani corporis fabrica* (On the Workings of the Human Body)

and includes other original and revised illustrations. Unlike the anatomists, who had analyzed the overextended clitoris as the instrument that incites female homoeroticism, Valverde focuses on the female reproductive organs in terms of their roles in pregnancy and childbirth. Despite this heterocentric application, Valverde's engravings of the female reproductive anatomy (following the tradition of the *Venus pudica* [the modest Venus]) portray the female figure covering her genitals with one hand and partially covering a breast with the other, thus pointing out the erotic physiology while obscuring it at the same time. Valerie Traub rightly observes the double bind of the anatomists who sought to illustrate female anatomy with precise detail without creating a pornographic image: "The act of covering the pubis visually dramatizes the question faced by medical writers: how to unveil the body without venturing into obscenity. . . . We might wonder whether such a gesture of self-protection might also be interpretable as an act of self-pleasure. It is this possibility that connects the renaissance of bodily knowledges . . . to the renaissance of *lesbianism*" (117, 124).

Focusing exclusively on the physiology of women, Rodrigo de Castro (1550?–1627?) published his *De universa mulierum morborum medicina* (On the Universal Medical Art of Women) in 1603, with several editions distributed across Europe during the seventeenth century.¹⁴ Citing many of his predecessors, Castro describes in his gynecological treatise the illicit sexual consequences that can result from an enlarged clitoris:

Indeed, this protuberance sometimes exceeds its natural measure, and increases to such a size that it projects outside the womb, occasioning deformity and shame. When it is continually rubbed by clothing, it is stimulated to such a degree that these women, to whom this member gives erections like men, cannot contain themselves, and fling themselves uncontrollably into lovemaking. They pollute themselves by coupling with incubi and succubi, as Amatus [Amato Lusitano or Joao Rodrigues, 1511–1568] related concerning two Turkish women of Thessalonike; and we have seen some women publicly punished at Lisbon for the same crime. They are called tribades by Caelius Aurelianus, dominators (*subigatrices*) by Plautus, and Martial says of a certain Bassa, that she "has devised a worthy demonstration of the Theban riddle: How there can be adultery where no man is to be found." . . . As Tertullian says in his book *To His Wife*, virginity is easier to preserve than chastity, for it is easier not to desire what we have never had, than not to desire what we once possessed. Therefore virgins who have never experienced coitus do not have much desire for it, because it is only a nuisance to be gotten over with. The rest of womankind desire this activity either for this same reason, or

because they recall bygone pleasure. This is even more true of those who are called tribades or “rubbers,” who only love to rub one another, and thus perform a disgraceful act upon one another. As we said, some have been accused of this crime, and those convicted were sent into exile. (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 141–43)¹⁵

While Castro defines sex between women in terms of rubbing (tribades) and penetrating (subigatrices) with partners who might “lie on top” (incubi) or “lie underneath” (succubi), the author also describes the disproportionate clitoris (“protuberance” or “nymph”) in terms of male anatomy, thereby likening lesbian penetration to heterosexual relations (“women, to whom this member gives erections like men”).

Discussions of an enlarged clitoris and its connection to lesbian practices inevitably lead to the popular topic of sex changes and hermaphroditism. Accordingly, Castro questions whether the presence of abnormal genitals is a foreshadowing of a potential sex mutation, or whether the “excessive” protrusions may indicate an intersexed condition instead:

Mercatus [Luis Mercado, 1520–1606] is of the opinion that this is the condition in which, as doctors think, women turn into men, and which is properly called a symptom of indecency. I would not be unwilling to assent to this, did I not believe that, from time to time, and in certain people, the sex is revealed rather than changed, either at puberty or on the wedding-day at the latest, for at that time nature more readily pushes the protuberant sexual members outside the body, which before that had been hidden. Many histories both of ancient times and of our own age relate this. Thus Empedocles of Agrigentum used to say, “And I was a boy myself, and once a girl.” Schenckius [Johann Georg Schenk, 1584–1620?] has collected many stories on this subject, and I refer the reader to him. Nonetheless, when he writes on the authority of others that there are women who both conceived, and afterwards, when they had been turned into men, engendered, this is a total fabrication. Furthermore, I would not venture to affirm what Columbus [Realdo Colombo, 1510–1559] claims, namely that this protuberance or “nymph” can grow to such a great size in all women. I would be more inclined to believe that this happens in those people who belong to the second species or class of hermaphrodites, as shall be explained below. Nevertheless I do not doubt that this tiny protuberance is found in all women, and that it hangs in front of the concavity of the vagina, for the purposes which we stated above, since those wings or membranes end there. (translation quoted in Borris, *Same-Sex*, 142–43)

Considering the early modern reliance on classical sources and the repetition among medical treatises during this time, it is not surprising to see a similar pattern in other European texts circulating during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In her study of early modern British texts, Donoghue examines how women who had sex with women were portrayed as either imitating a man by using an overgrown member that allowed them to penetrate their lovers, or they were called hermaphrodites with “monstrous genitals,” while in other tales they experienced magical sex-metamorphoses (“Imagined,” 200).

In his 1573 treatise *On Monsters and Marvels*, Ambroise Paré wrote about women who could transmute into men, claiming that there were no cases of the reverse because Nature tended to perfect itself (33). Accounts of women who unwittingly began to exhibit primary and secondary sex characteristics associated with maleness were frequently celebrated in this type of treatise. In accordance with the medical community, which seemed to be unfazed by the cases of women who had been anatomically transformed into men, numerous tales of such mutations were illustrated, circulated, and published during the early modern period. As Huarte de San Juan insists to his doubting reader, “That women have turned into men after birth should not shock anyone because besides having been related as true by many ancient writers, it happened not long ago in Spain” (609).¹⁶ Antonio de Torquemada’s 1570 *Jardín de flores curiosas* (Garden of Curious Flowers) likewise cites ancient and modern cases of women who had been married (and some who had even given birth) before experiencing spontaneous sex changes, as does Paré in his chapter of “Memorable Stories about Women who have Degenerated into Men” (31). Many of these early modern women who changed into men eventually married women after establishing their new identities as men: “There was another woman who, after having been married and given birth to a son, turned into a man and married a woman who had ‘her’ children” (Torquemada, 188).¹⁷ Some cases involved adolescent girls who, instead of starting menstruation, discovered previously undetected internal penises suddenly popping out, such as the young woman who had come “to the age when she should start menstruation, but instead a male member began to grow and came out from where it was hidden. Therefore, being a woman, she became a man, and so they dressed her in men’s clothing” (189).¹⁸ In fact, Torquemada suggests that one case of female-to-male transsexuality had been preceded by infertility and marital problems, attributing its occurrence to the intensity of the woman’s mental image of seeing herself dressed in men’s clothing:

As this woman had no children, her husband and she were not well suited for each other, so she had a hard life. Out of envy or some other

reason, one night the woman stole the clothes of a boy who was staying in the house and put them on, left the house, and traveled around pretending to be a man. She made a living that way until nature worked with such force to cause this, or her intense imagination from seeing herself dressed as a man was so powerful that this came true: she turned into a man and married another woman. (190)¹⁹

Just as women's dangerous thoughts—inflamed by visual or mental images during conception—can affect the physical attributes of the child, transgressive gender role-play such as cross-dressing can also impact physiology through a change in sex assignment. Moreover, same-sex desire is often a key factor in most narratives that revolve around sex changes, either as a motivating factor or as an implied consequence. Although the subsequent relationship is deemed orthodox (as the woman is now a man), the texts tend to privilege sex-at-birth by continuing to refer to the individual as “she” and thereby creating a narrative that suggests traces of a lesbian union (“she turned into a man and married another woman”).

The paradoxical hetero/homosexual traces in the tales of anatomical sex changes are perhaps best illustrated in a well-circulated news pamphlet published in 1617 in Granada, Seville, and in the New World in Lima, Peru. This tabloid-style publication tells the “true story” of a thirty-four-year-old “butch” nun, María Muñoz, who suddenly possessed male genitals, dark facial hair, and a deep voice. It describes how her father had placed her in a convent “because she was ‘closed up’ and not fit for marriage” (Ettinghausen, *Noticias*, n.p.).²⁰ However, her naturally masculine nature had drawn suspicion, and therefore she had been examined by the prioress and found to be female. Even the other nuns had secretly investigated her anatomy: “They [the other nuns] had seen on many occasions that she was not a man—sometimes they peeked at her while sleeping, other times while pretending to be playing so they could see her. And with this, they calmed any doubts, since her strength, spirit, characteristics and manners were all masculine.”²¹ Despite her apparent female anatomy, María admitted later to performing a monthly deception: “She confessed that she had never had a period, and so that the other nuns wouldn’t call her ‘butch’ [*marimacho*], she would stain her undergarments with the blood from her mortifications, telling the others that she had her period.”²²

Nevertheless, her life changed drastically one day. While involved in heavy labor, she suddenly discovered a swelling in her groin, and three days later, male organs came forth through a small hole where female genitalia normally would have been located. A new examination revealed that she was now a man. Her primary sex characteristics were not the only features to

change: "We examined her chest, and although she was thirty-four years old, she was flat as a board. In the six or seven days since the male member had emerged, facial hair had started to grow and her voice had begun to deepen."²³ These secondary sex characteristics helped confirm the authenticity of the anatomical transmutation. Despite the scandal, the shocking case has a happy ending that underscores the cultural privilege for male identity: "Her father is very pleased because he is rich and had no son to inherit his wealth. Now he has a very manly son who can marry; and *she* is also happy because after twelve years of incarceration she is enjoying freedom. Having been transformed from woman to man, nature could not have bestowed upon *her* any better material blessing" (emphases mine).²⁴ As Lisa Vollendorf notes, "Like the gender-confused references to Magdalena Muñoz as both *hijo* (son) and *ella* (she), the Inquisitors played into the gender confusion they sought to avoid" (*Lives*, 29). Of course, the official interpretation of the nun-turned-man story deemed her case a success since there was no longer an issue of sex or gender ambiguity, despite the fact that the new unnamed man is still referred to as a "she" in the narrative. As a result, in the news story, María symbolically remains a woman who is now free to legally marry another woman.

In an attempt to clarify all the contradictions, inconsistencies, and confusion regarding exactly what constituted female sodomy, Franciscan theologian Ludovico Maria Sinistrari applies Thomas Bartholin's work on female anatomy to theological treatments of lesbian practices in his extensive treatise *De Delictis et Poenis* (On Crimes and Punishments), published in 1700. Sinistrari is openly candid about the ignorant and erroneous decisions made by ecclesiastics in cases involving sex between women:

All Moralists treat of this filthy vice between women and declare that real Sodomy is committed between them. But as to how this takes place, nobody that I have seen explains. Yet to know this or to be ignorant of it must not be thought a thing of no importance or idle curiosity. In practice, this knowledge is necessary for Confessors, that they may be able to determine, when women, by their mutual touches, have brought on but voluntary pollution, and when they have fallen into the crime of Sodomy. . . . But how a female can copulate with a female, by rubbing each other together, so that, on one hand, they may be said to commit Sodomy, whilst on the other hand, by rubbing each other in a similar way, they may be considered to perform only pollution: that's the question! Some Theologians are of opinion that if a woman gets upon a woman, and both fall to thrusting at each other mutually, it may happen that the seed of her on the top may be injected into the natural vase of

her lying under her; then Sodomy is performed; but should the seed be not received into that vase, it is only pollution. . . . There is no probability in this opinion. Those that have any slight knowledge of works on Anatomy, know it is impossible for the seed of her on the top to be cast into the vase of the woman under her. . . . If therefore both women are stretched, one, for instance, over the other, it is impossible for the seed of her on the top to be injected into, or enter the vase of the one under her. (Summers translation, 34–36)

Sinistrari first establishes the anatomical impossibility of injecting seed “into the natural vase” of the woman lying underneath her merely by “thrusting at each other.” He then repudiates the other most common theological theory on sex between women, in which the use of an instrument defines whether the women have committed sodomy: “Other Theologians, nay most of them, hold that such like copulation is effected by means of some tool of glass, wood, leather, or other material, cunningly wrought in the shape of a man’s yard; with this tied between her thighs, the woman on the top couples with the one under her. This was the opinion of Antonio Gómez” (37).

While taking issue with Gómez’s legal opinion that use of a penis substitute should require harsher punishment, Sinistrari concedes that penetration with an instrument (or with fingers) does constitute “human perverseness, beastly lewdness and the suggestion of the Demon,” as “such tools have been invented and used for gratifying the savage lustfulness of some certain women” (38). Yet he claims that this sexual practice is mere pollution and not sodomy. For there to be true sodomy, in Sinistrari’s view, at least one of the women must possess the kind of overdeveloped clitoris described in works such as Castro’s treatise. Citing Bartholin’s treatise on anatomy to establish the medical basis for his definition of female sodomy, Sinistrari compares the “large nymph” to an erect penis: “Thus some women, who are provided with this kind of clitoris, run after other women, and especially girls. . . . A woman can not be deflowered or defiled by a woman, unless she who has ravished, chanced to have a large nymph in her womb, as several women have: that is a sort of kernel which sometimes grows so big that it erects like a man’s yard, inciting them to coition, just as males” (45–46).

Exemplifying Donoghue’s description of the racism that “is often found at the heart of social constructions of lesbianism” (“Imagining,” 205), Sinistrari claims that while men are more apt to practice sodomy than women, European women in particular are less inclined to act on this physiological possibility, “although this occurs seldomer than the Sodomy of men. The reason is, because in Europe the breaking out of the clitoris does not

happen very often; and because all the women in whom it does break out do not labour under this beastly passion. By the virtue of continence strengthened with God's grace, their senses resist the titillation" (Summers translation, 47).²⁵

In another disavowal of prevalent theories on women's desire and anatomy, Sinistrari questions whether the cases of sex change from woman to man were actually instances of an overstretched or hypertrophied clitoris:

Therefore the girls looked upon as changed into males were those whose clitoris, as we have said, broke out; and, it was owing to this transformation in their sex, that persons unacquainted with anatomy thought they had turned males. What is quite plain from this fact is, that, in the aforesaid girls, no scrotum appeared with its tackles, no beard with a manly voice, nor did the cleft in the female cuntus disappear either: but, the latter remaining constant, the clitoris alone broke out, and people believed it was a man's yard, it looked so like one. But if some of those, that are reported to be transformed from women into males, are said to have taken wives and begotten children, and obtained a beard, voice and a man's body, . . . this turned out, because such creatures were androgynuses, in whom the female sex appeared in their girlhood to be the prevailing one. (43–44)

With these distinctions between a hypertrophied clitoris and hermaphroditism, any confessor should be able to avoid the kind of mistakes that the author exposes of his colleagues, such as the one who mistook a nun whose "clitoris simply hangs down . . . like a small yard" for a woman who had been transformed into a man, and thereby released her from convent life:

An accident of this kind happened to a nun in her fourteenth year's profession, in the Convent of the Passion, at San Feliz de los Galegos, in the dioceses of Ciudad. She consulted Barbosa about her case. But I suppose he had not read this doctrine on the clitoris. Because if he had glanced over what modern Anatomists write about it, he would have boldly asserted that this nun was not at all unsexed; that she was consequently bound to keep her vows and cloister, but that care should be taken to prevent her from being able to carry on any obscene practices with the nuns. (45)

To emphasize the importance of understanding female anatomy, the author tells of another more serious blunder in a convent in 1671 due to the ignorance of the confessor:

In a famous convent of her native town, the clitoris of a most respectable nun suddenly burst out. Stricken with so strange an accident, which was very troublesome to her, inasmuch as it was causing her serious temptations of the flesh, she sent for a surgeon, a first rate practitioner, but a sorry anatomist. He took her in hands. When he had vainly tried all sorts of softening medicine to take the stiffness out of the clitoris, and seeing it continually erecting, he cut it clean off to the imminent danger of the nun: for this mutilation had like to kill her, and she was months before she recovered from it. The surgeon himself confided the secret to me and ingenuously confessed he had recourse to this maim, because then he did not know the doctrine on the clitoris, which he afterwards learned in Bartholinus's *Tabula Anatomica*. (48)

In both of these unfortunate (if not tragic) convent anecdotes, lesbian passion is attributed to abnormal anatomy, both misunderstood by the male authority whose job it is to establish control in the religious community. Consequently, Sinistrari's text comes across as an updated manual on lesbianism and women's anatomy to help confessors face these issues accurately in their own practice. According to the author, the detailed information in his text is particularly necessary due to the taboo and shame of the topic—the "*peccatum mutum*." As a result, neither confessor nor lesbian practitioner are motivated to provide the details needed to distinguish between pollution and sodomy:

Confessors can therefore form from this doctrine an exact notion of the species of crime committed between women, whose shame at least prevents from clearly explaining it. They accuse themselves by merely saying, they got upon other women and enjoyed them, or had succumbed to other women in a similar manner. A modest and prudent confessor does not dare question them farther, or inquire about the circumstances of so foul a deed, especially if the penitents are virgins or unmarried. Whence the Confessor's mind becomes confused and perplexed in trying to discern their crime, that is whether pollution or Sodomy; if pollution, he can absolve them; if Sodomy, he can not. (49)

To avoid such embarrassment and confusion, Sinistrari provides sample questions that the confessor might ask:

Should a woman then say she was the *incuba* in a like performance, the Confessor might ask her: Did she penetrate with any part of her person into the vase of the *succuba*? (I call the clitoris *part*, not *member*: for it is

that part of a woman's member designed for generation, just as the finger is not a member, but part of a member.) If she says yes, it is then plain she has committed Sodomy; if she says no, it is but pollution. He might likewise ask the *succuba*: Did the *incuba* penetrate any other way into her vase? And how? According to her answer, he is to form his judgment. (49)

Of course, clitoral proof for a sodomy conviction would require an official genital inspection of the defendant conducted by trained and trustworthy midwives or matrons, "for, if these find the clitoris, and it be proved the women lay together, and the matrons' corroborations side with the crime, there is a presumption that they made use of it for the heinous delinquency. . . . Hence it is necessary to have recourse to torture, that the Judge may find out whether the unmentionable crime was committed" (50).

Although Sinistrari demonizes lesbian acts, he also exposes a partial explanation for why much of the discussion of same-sex practices between women was encoded and encrypted in a mutual process of silent confession. In light of Sinistrari's concern about confessors' ignorance and misinformation regarding female same-sex practices, it is not surprising that most early modern confessors' manuals offered but vague indications of sinful sex acts between women, usually categorized under "unnatural sins" (such as masturbation, bestiality, homosexual relations—a man with a man or a "woman with a woman, which pertains to sodomy"—and heterosexual sex outside normal usage) (Villalobos, 385).

Other confessional manuals, such as Juan Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario e institucion de curas, para administrar a los naturales de este Reyno* (Ritual Rules and Organization of Priests to Govern the Natives of This Kingdom; published in 1631 in Lima, Peru), seem just as concerned with the mindset of women during sexual encounters with other women as with the specific sex acts. Pérez Bocanegra's sample questions for confessors to ask female confessants in Spain's colonies in Peru are provided in both Spanish and Quechua:

Have you sinned with another woman? With how many women? How many times? When you were doing this abominable sin, were you thinking about married men? Single men? Clergy? Monks? Relatives? Your husband? . . . Have you touched your private parts with your hands? Have you inserted your finger inside your private parts? Have you given yourself carnal pleasure this way? When you were doing this, were you thinking about a man? How many men were you thinking about? Who were they? (230–31)²⁶

Pérez Bocanegra's manual demonstrates the heterocentric bias that many male authorities exhibited when addressing sexual relations between women. Unable to imagine lesbian relations separate from heterosexual fantasy, the ecclesiastic implies that same-sex acts were a substitute for relations with a man, despite the fact that their frequency might indicate otherwise ("With how many women? How many times?"). His text also reveals the frequent association of same-sex relations with masturbation recurrent in medieval penitentials.

Erotic imagination, fantasy, and gossip undoubtedly played a vital role in interpreting and punishing sexual acts between women. As we will see in the secular criminal and Inquisitional cases analyzed in the next chapter, the process of interpreting female homoeroticism involved a complex interplay among religious and civil officials, neighbors and other witnesses, and most importantly, the female defendants at the heart of the investigations.

3

Criminal Lesbians

The taxonomic variations that gave rise to disagreement among religious, courtly, and scientific treatises played out in secular and Inquisitional cases involving female sodomy in Spain. The surviving evidence depicts a criminal world that often connected sorcery, prostitution, and disciplinary institutions to female homoeroticism, with early modern legal cases revealing the range and variety of these intimate relationships. Some cases included same-sex marriages that had been achieved through cross-dressing, as well as long-term domestic partnerships between women who did not deem it necessary or desirable to dress in men's clothing.

Some women were successful in contesting the sentences that followed these suits, but not all of them. Francesc Eiximenis (d. 1409) cited the case of a woman who had dressed as a man, held a government job as a judicial officer, and married two women. Although she was convicted of sodomy (having used a penis substitute), her years of service to the government counted on her behalf, as she was not burned at the stake but given the more merciful punishment of being hanged:

I was once in a city in Spain and was present when a woman was hanged who had for some years held a judicial office while clothed in masculine attire, and had taken two wives. And she had taken the two women as wives before the church; and the second of them was a widow who accused her of not being a man but a woman and indeed that was the case. The conclusion was reached on the spot that the one who had taken the women in this way had actually been a sodomite, having taken up with those women who must have been her wives for a number of years. Given the clemency of the authorities, and because she had loyally and piously served the republic as a judicial officer for a long time, she was not burnt but was hanged with that artifice around her neck with which she had

carnally lain with the two women. (translation quoted in Blackmore, "Poets," 218)¹

A case from Valencia from September 1502, mentioned in *Llibre de memòries*, shares certain similarities with the scenario that Eiximenis witnessed. Like the woman hanged with her dildo, the unnamed defendant had also passed as a man, and confessed her female anatomy only when she was arrested for theft. She too had married a woman, and she had worn an artificial penis made of lambskin, which she had also used during sexual relations with other women. Despite the use of an instrument and the subsequent sentence of hanging, the queen intervened to stay the sentence, claiming that it had not been properly processed.²

These brief references to female sodomy raise questions about perceptions of same-sex relations between women in early modern Spain. Were the wives and other female lovers aware of the biological sex of their "husband" or lover? If so, do these cases suggest that when a same-sex couple was investigated, only the woman accused of playing the role of a man would be prosecuted while her partner (claiming ignorance) would be seen as the victim of a predatory and deceptive lesbian? The answers to such questions reveal many of the inconsistencies and contradictions persistent in both secular and Inquisitional cases against same-sex intimacy during this period.

CATALINA DE BELUNÇE AND MARICHE DE OYARZÚN

Almost a year after the timely acquittal of the "cross-dressed sodomite" in Valencia, another case of lesbian relations came to court, and again ended with an acquittal through royal edict. According to court documents housed in the Archive of the Royal Appeals Court of Valladolid, Miguel Ochoa (mayor of San Sebastián) was informed that Catalina de Belunçe and Mariche de Oyarzún were having sexual relations "like a man and a woman . . . doing carnal acts that only a man should do to a woman. . . . They had completed and perpetrated this crime on numerous and diverse occasions" (Segura Graiño, 140).³ While the sexual acts are described in terms of a heterosexual coupling, the text does not mention the presence or use of a penis substitute. Consequently, Catalina was sentenced not to death but instead to perpetual banishment from San Sebastián, and told that her goods and possessions would be confiscated. Regardless of the lighter punishment, the court documents relating her sentence stipulate that if she were to return to San Sebastián, "she would be arrested, her hands tied with rope, a braided noose would be placed around her neck, she would be nude from the waist up, and she would be paraded around the town, with her crime publicly an-

nounced, before she was hanged upside down from her feet until she died, at which point she would be lowered and displayed as an example of terror and punishment for all the witnesses" (142–43).⁴

Despite the ominous threat of suspension (which was recommended along with castration as punishment for male sodomites in Alfonso X's thirteenth-century legal code), as well as two prior sessions of water torture, Catalina did not confess to a crime but soon presented her appeal to the Royal Appeals Court. In her defense of herself, Catalina stated simply that she was innocent of any criminal activity and that she was a respectable woman who had been prosecuted without any evidence of the crime of which she had been accused. She demanded not only monetary compensation but "restitution of her honor and good reputation" (143).⁵

Given the lack of more specific evidence against the defendant, Mayor Miguel Ochoa had cited Catalina's "*fama pública*" (reputation) and public knowledge of her sexual relationship with Mariche as proof of her guilt (144). When Catalina defended her social standing, she also pointed out that the testimony of the only witness against her should be inadmissible, as it belonged to the other party implicated in the case (presumably a reference to Mariche, who was suspiciously absent from the case brought against Catalina). Furthermore, Catalina reminded the court that she had not confessed to the crime during the torture sessions and that the mayor had falsely confiscated her possessions and sold them, thus violating the law. The Royal Appeals Court granted Catalina a full pardon, she recovered her possessions, and the exile was lifted.

There are some significant mysteries in the case against Catalina. For example, why wasn't Mariche mentioned as co-defendant in the case, especially considering that Catalina had been charged specifically with having sexual relations with Mariche, and the description of the sex acts portray them as mutual and apparently consensual, not to mention recurrent? Furthermore, if Mariche had been a credible witness and confessed her own involvement in lesbian relations, Catalina could not have been absolved (see Segura Graiño, 137). Despite the gaps in the prosecution's case against Catalina and her successful appeal and acquittal later, it is impossible to speculate as to what actually happened between these two women behind closed doors. Nonetheless, in a patently heterosexual reading of this story, Cristina Segura Graiño speculates that the mayor may have tried to seduce Catalina without success and that he had instigated the accusation of lesbianism as a way to shame her and then keep her property and banish her from the territory over which he ruled. By accusing her of a crime she could not imagine, Segura Graiño implies, the mayor had sought to put Catalina at a disadvantage and perhaps play his last seduction card (138).

Equally speculative but no less plausible than Segura Graiño's hetero-centric theory is the possibility that the handsome Catalina did indeed have lesbian desires and that *Mariche* herself had reason to seek vengeance against Catalina. Vengeful jealousy is not the exclusive province of scorned or rejected heterosexual lovers, after all. While the details of Catalina's connection to *Mariche* (or to other women) remain a mystery, her case provides a revealing example of how male authorities understood and sentenced lesbian relations during the early modern period. At the same time, the case is instructive in that it demonstrates how one woman was successful in soliciting an acquittal, as well as the reversal of damaging penalties that threatened her livelihood and reputation.

Like the secular courts' approach to female homoeroticism, the Inquisitional tribunals were occasionally inconsistent and apparently confused by certain sex acts between women. In May 1560, the Inquisitional tribunal in Aragón reported that even after consulting with lawyers and theologians, it was not sure if a case of lesbian practices among "several women" who had had genital contact and emitted semen but *without* the use of an instrument should be prosecuted according to the 1524 papal brief, in which Clement VII gave the Inquisitional courts in Aragón jurisdiction over sodomy cases. Interestingly, in the inquiry (which was written in Castilian), the tribunal scribe switched to Latin to describe the specific sexual acts between the women. This calculated code-switching might have been an attempt at legal precision while also creating some linguistic distance from (and granting modesty to) the *peccatum mutum*:

We have received reports that in a certain town there are some women who have relations with other women in such a way that one *agebat partem viri y la otra mulieris et sine instr[ument]o aliquo la agente' mittebat semen y la pasciente'recupiebat et emittebat semen ac si cum viro ageret* [one took the male role, and the other the female, and without any instrument the active was giving off semen and the passive was receiving and emitting semen as in sex with a man]. The doubt is whether, according to the brief, this constitutes sodomy. We have consulted many lawyers and theologians and there are different opinions. Some say that it does constitute sodomy, and others say that we are not judges here and that this case does not pertain to the statements in the brief. (AHN: Inquisición, libro 962, 8v)⁶

After consulting the Supreme Council of the Inquisition in Madrid (the *Suprema*), the Inquisitors in Aragón were instructed not to prosecute,

because sexual behavior between women who did not use an instrument did not constitute sodomy and therefore was not in their jurisdiction.⁷ The importance of the presence or absence of a penis substitute in sexual relations between women was repeated in various Inquisitional reports. Another account of the 1560 inquiry reiterated that Inquisitors “should not be involved in judging cases of vice between women when no instrument was used” (BN: MS 848, 77r).⁸

ANA ALER AND MARIANA LÓPEZ

In 1656, without evidence of a penis substitute, the Inquisition in Aragón judged the rumored same-sex relations between a twenty-eight-year-old widow named Ana Aler and a twenty-two-year-old laundress named Mariana López to constitute sodomy and they were prosecuted accordingly. The two women denied any wrongdoing, but the testimonies of “prying neighbors” in Zaragoza had provided enough evidence to satisfy the Inquisitors.⁹ While the five witnesses who testified against Ana and Mariana were identified not by name but by their sex (two men and three women), their statements reveal how they perceived both the sexual and personal details of an intimate and seemingly enmeshed relationship between the two women. The assessment of what happened between Ana and Mariana was based the witnesses’ visual and auditory “spying” as “they watched [the women] during the day and listened to them at night” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 995, 482r). One witness reported that Ana had been hugging and kissing Mariana and “would put her hands under Mariana’s skirts and touch her genitals. The two of them would make each other jealous and then swear their loyalty to each other by God and make other promises. If one didn’t eat, then the other wouldn’t either, and they would follow each other around” (482r).¹⁰

The portrait that the witnesses paint of the intimacy between Ana and Mariana is made even more complex by suggestions that Ana had engaged in sexual commerce with another woman in Zaragoza. One day while Ana and Mariana had been hugging and kissing, Mariana had told Ana to stop, as she feared someone might see them. Ana had then become irritated by her lover’s caution and had begun to boast that even the most beautiful woman in Zaragoza was willing to pay to have sex with her (482r-v). While Ana’s comments had been meant to inspire jealousy and prove her desirability, they also suggest that women—even respectable ladies—were willing to pay for lesbian sexual services. According to the testimony of witnesses, Ana had also insisted (whether jokingly or not) that she wouldn’t have sex with Mariana “if Mariana didn’t pay, . . . and she bragged on another occasion that

she would do it with the prettiest woman in Zaragoza for a *dobla* [gold coin] each time" (482r-v).¹¹

Surely theirs is not the first relationship to mix finances and intimacy, but one wonders if the comments perceived by the curious eavesdroppers might have instead indicated the lighthearted joking in which some lovers engage during (or when referring to) sexual relations. On the other hand, Ana's bragging about how the "best woman in Zaragoza" (484r) would pay to have sex with her says just as much about Ana's sexual self-promotion as it does about the potential business of lesbian prostitution in early modern Spain.

Regardless of the possible financial implications, most of the witness testimony in this case sought to establish the specificity of the sexual act between the women. Some witnesses, for example, provided further proof of the sexual relationship between the two by describing the mattress involved in their carnal encounters as well as the women's erotic dialogue during sexual relations:

On different occasions and in different homes, the defendant [Ana] slept with Mariana, and the witnesses heard them breathing heavily and saying shameful words like a man and a woman during the carnal act. This occurred twice a night for two months. They slept on a mattress that showed many signs of the emission of semen, since it had been brand-new when they started to sleep on it. One day [the witnesses] saw them at nine o'clock in the morning in bed about eight feet from their open window; Ana was on top of Mariana, moving back and forth, and Mariana said, "Give it to me, I can't wait any longer." (482v)¹²

While the "open window" cited in multiple accounts was intended to provide some credibility to the voyeuristic testimony, another witness confessed to peeping at the women "through a hole the size of a coin and they also had the window open. Mariana lay down on the bed and Ana was between her legs and they were moving around, kissing each other and saying shameful things like when a man and a woman are together carnally. This lasted more than a half hour and then they got up and one told the other that she had had an effusion of semen" (482v).¹³ On other occasions, the women would be "hugging and kissing and [one] would let [the other] use her hands to touch her private parts, rubbing them until she had an effusion of semen" (483v).¹⁴ Even without any indication that Ana and Mariana had used an instrument, their crime was recorded as sodomy, and the sentence for each woman was one hundred lashings, eight years of exile, and prohibition from living in the same location as the other (483r-v).

THE ILLICIT "DOMESTIC PARTNERSHIP" OF INÉS DE
SANTA CRUZ AND CATALINA LEDESMA

The importance of witness testimony is perhaps nowhere more noteworthy than in the long-term partnership of Inés de Santa Cruz (also known as Juana Martínez) and Catalina Ledesma, who were arrested as *bujarronas* (female sodomites) in 1603 in Salamanca.¹⁵ Since Inés and Catalina had previously been convicted of sodomy in Valladolid and had been eventually sentenced to exile and public lashings, they were now charged as recidivist lesbians (as well as with having prostitutes in their home). According to various witnesses, Inés had worn a nun's habit while claiming to be a *beata* (holy woman) who was rounding up wayward women from the streets and placing them in her home to facilitate their transition to a convent. She had solicited donations for this purpose, but many believed that the whole setup had been a ruse and that none of the six women in her home ever entered a convent, instead continuing to participate in illegal sexual commerce. The death sentences initially assigned to Inés and Catalina would not have been unexpected, since they were believed to have used dildos or penis-shaped instruments made from little cane reeds. However, when they appealed this verdict to the high court at Valladolid, Inés's sentence was reduced to four hundred lashes (only two hundred for Catalina) and both received perpetual banishment from Castile.

What emerges from the graphic and detailed testimonies of the seventeen female witnesses and two defendants is the fragmented outline of an ill-fated domestic partnership between two women in early modern Spain. However, given the nature of the criminal proceedings, the details of this illegal union were processed through the collective fantasies and perceptions about the strong bond between these lovers. According to witnesses and confirmed by the defendants, the relationship between Inés and Catalina involved long-term cohabitation (Inés testified that they had lived together for eight years). While Inés described her legal status as single, Catalina had married a man when she was young; she had decided to leave heterosexual married life in order to live with Inés. Many of the neighbors testified that it was common knowledge that Inés and Catalina lived together ("eating at the same table and sleeping in the same bed") and participated in a personal and sexual relationship: "The affection and love shared between the defendants was public knowledge in the neighborhood where they lived and among other people who know them. This explains why they have carnal relations, during which they use an invention shaped like a man's member and made from a cane. One gets on top of the other in order to insert it and commit the sin and crime that everyone knows has caused a scandal" (AGS, 4v–5r).¹⁶

Rumor was a powerful tool in the shaping of public opinion. To greater or lesser degrees, most of the testimony gathered against women accused of illicit sexual relations with other women relied on rumor, gossip, and public opinion. Ana Martín (a servant in the house of Catalina's father, where the couple had lived together for five years) told authorities that knowledge of the sexual relations between Inés and Catalina had become so public that they were nicknamed according to their purported activities: "In the neighborhood where the women live, all the people who know them are aware that they have carnal relations like a man and a woman using a cane instrument in the shape of a man's genitals, which is why they call them the 'little canes' and this is public knowledge among everyone who knows them" (4v).¹⁷ When the authorities went to Inés's home to investigate, they discovered a small cane in her bedroom inside the pocket of a skirt, another smaller cane in a chest, and a larger and pointy cane under the bed (5v–6r). In fact, reminiscent of Francesc Eiximenis and his account of the woman "hanged with the artifice around her neck," another witness later claimed that when Inés and Catalina received the public lashings for their crimes, they were forced to wear the dildos around their neck ("it was said that these women had illicit relations using a dildo, which, when they were whipped, they wore around their neck") (33r).¹⁸

While it may have been public knowledge that Inés and Catalina had been lovers for years and were suspected of committing the serious crime of sodomy by using a dildo, the detail with which the numerous female neighbors and witnesses described the couple's sexual activities reveals as much about the collective fantasies regarding sex between women as it does about the eroticism between the defendants. Although the servant Ana Martín claimed to have seen Inés and Catalina engaged in carnal relations (4r), much of the testimony by the witnesses relies on auditory clues about the women's sexual activities. This listening-centered testimony, then, necessitated a significant degree of guesswork regarding the sex acts that might correspond to the noises that the neighboring residents could hear. The plausible narratives were presented as facts and accompanied by the erotic sound effects, creating a synesthetic "visual listening" or "auditory viewing." Ana Martín, for example, testified that she had listened very carefully when Inés and Catalina were engaged in sexual relations, and had therefore been able to deduce exactly what they were doing and to reproduce the sounds that the lovers had been making during the night: "The two were together in the carnal act and so she began to listen very carefully and she understood that one was on top of the other. . . . Catalina was underneath and Inés was on top and she heard that they were panting and puffing and breathing

heavily—*ah, ah, ah*—as if they were exhausted in the carnal act, by which she understood clearly that they were having sexual relations” (5r).¹⁹

Leonor de la Cruz, in whose home Inés and Catalina had stayed, also cited the verbal exchanges during carnal relations, as well as identifying the specific acts (despite the fact that she had been able only to listen to the activities): “She heard them many nights as they were kissing and hugging and saying loving things while touching each other from their forehead to their mouth and breasts to their genitals and using their hands one would ask, ‘Does that feel good?’ and the other would answer yes” (34v–35r).²⁰

The defendants themselves were forced during each interview to provide sexually explicit details, and the testimonies of both Catalina and Inés are inconsistent (which they justify by their fear of torture). Perhaps not unexpectedly, given the seriousness of the crime, both of the accused seemed to focus on the role that the other had played in their carnal activities. In one testimony, for example, Inés seemed to blame Catalina for inciting a lustful incident: “Catalina said to the confessant, ‘My love,’ ‘My life,’ ‘Do you want to fuck?’ and so the confessant got on top of Catalina like a man would and opening her vagina and genitals the confessant would get on top of her and they would bang against each other until the confessant would emit her semen inside Catalina’s vagina” (8r).²¹ Catalina’s testimony also confirmed the specific act, but described it in language that is a bit more subdued: “She confesses that for three years she and Inés had been having carnal relations like a man and a woman with her underneath Inés de Santa Cruz and Inés on top emitting her semen into the vagina of the confessant while kissing, hugging, and saying loving words like a man and a woman, which had happened each time—about thirty times total but after they were exiled they have not had carnal relations” (7v).²² When asked with what instrument they used to have carnal relations, Catalina answered that Inés had only used her hand on her genitals, and that when Inés wanted to emit, Inés would use her hand to open Catalina so that the semen would fall inside (7v). During a later interview, when asked the same question, Catalina said that they had not used an instrument or dildo, but that Inés had been nude “on top of her with their genitals pressed together as if she were a man with a woman and after a while she discovered that her private parts were wet and she didn’t know if it was urine or if Inés had poured something down there” (20v).²³

In another testimony, Inés admitted to lying about whether she had used an instrument during sex because she was afraid of being tortured. She now confessed that they had used an instrument made of leather and had inserted it inside Catalina’s genitals and vice versa. Inés claims that they had done this only three or four times, stopping because it had been painful and

was causing injuries (9v). In later testimony, Inés denied having used an instrument during sexual relations or having spilled her semen into Catalina's genitals (44v).

While the criminal case dealt with the illicit sexual activities between Inés and Catalina, other women were also involved with the couple and were therefore interviewed by the authorities. During what appeared to be a post-breakup period between Catalina and Inés, the former went to work in the monastery of Santo Espíritus as a servant to a nun. Catalina testified that she suspected a possible affair between Inés and Angela Jerónima, who were also working as servants in the convent. Angela, in fact, confessed to the authorities that she did sleep in the same bed with Inés (36v). Interestingly, Catalina recounts a telling conversation in which Angela questions why any woman would want to sleep with men, especially after having slept with other women:

She told her many times, "Why would you want to have anything to do with men," and that she doesn't want to see them because women can get pregnant if they sleep with men. They also create doubts about paternity but when women sleep with each other it is enjoyable and with no risk of pregnancy . . . and that after having sexual relations with María de la Paz from Madrid three or four times, she couldn't imagine having sex with men because they repulsed her. (19v–20r)²⁴

Catalina also reported that Angela had come across the mother superior with another nun enjoying each other, and when the *bujarronas de las monjas* (sodomite nuns) gave her the evil eye, she had decided to leave the convent (20r). It would appear that other women were also engaged in sexual relations in the convent, as Catalina reports that "María de la Paz and other women were punished for such evil acts and they said that they had used an instrument made of leather or a dildo for these relations" (20r).²⁵

While many of the leading questions and much of the testimony sought to establish the sexual specifics necessary for criminal convictions and sentencing, a significant portion of the interviews also documented the conflict and violence between Inés and Catalina during their period of exile in Salamanca and later in Valladolid. The women who witnessed a series of dramatic fights between the two defendants recounted illuminating details about the relationship, as well as of the dynamics during what appears to have been the aftermath of their separation. Catalina describes Inés's aggression in great detail. She testifies that after they had been publicly punished and exiled, she had tried to start a new life, but her jealous and violent ex-partner had stalked and harassed her:

They asked her if it was true that the confessant had spent the fourteen months since she came to this city in the company of Inés de Santa Cruz eating together at the same table and sleeping together in the same bed. She answered that since coming to this city she had been pursued by Inés in an attempt to make her go back to her and engage in relations and friendship and live with her wherever she chose. Inés said that she would give her anything she needed. The confessant said she was always trying to get away from her, trying to defend herself, refusing to accept her friendship. Even when the confessant went to work as a servant, Inés would show up and tell them not to employ the confessant, saying that she was a whore and was having an affair with a married man and that she was sleeping with men. If any man showed interest in the confessant, Inés would go to them and beg and convince them not to see her. Other times she would fight with them as if she were a man like them and would threaten them, saying that she would denounce them to the officials . . . and seeing that the confessant didn't want to have a sexual relationship with her, Inés would take her clothes. . . . She would pull her hair and punch her and other harmful actions because she [Catalina] didn't want to leave with her or go wherever she said. Another time she injured her head and jaw when Inés shoved her against a wall and she left the confessant scratched and she was always bruised from the physical mistreatment. (16v–17v)²⁶

Other female witnesses confirmed the physical violence between the two women. In a detailed account of a fight between Inés and Catalina that had continued for two days, the witness testified that the two had used “bad words” and that Inés had called Catalina a “lying whore” and asked her “why was she having an affair with a married man and that she was taking food from his wife and children, arguing that it would be better for Catalina to live with Inés in her house as an honorable woman where she [Inés] would give her clothes, shoes, food and everything she might need” (13r).²⁷ Inés's statements imply that a heterosexual affair outside the confines of marriage would be more damaging to Catalina's personal reputation and honor than a same-sex relationship. According to the witness's statement, however, Catalina did not share the same opinion: “She said she would rather be the mistress of one hundred and twenty men than be with Inés,” calling her a “sodomite” and adding that “she had wasted many years—time that she should have been with her husband—out of love for her. She had gone through all her money and had suffered the punishment of public lashings because of her” (4v).²⁸ Not unlike the disputes over property, money, and fidelity that can emerge during contentious separations and divorces, the

arguments cited by numerous witnesses included accusations regarding possessions, domestic abuse, regrets, and jealousy. In her recollection of this fight, Catalina mentioned a quarrel over a scarf that Inés had taken from her; when she asked Inés to return it, Inés had insulted her by saying, "You whore, it must be a gift from your boyfriend," and had then continued to insult her by saying that she was sleeping with men (18v).²⁹

Various witnesses described another argument that had taken place in public. It had involved Angela Jerónima, who reportedly was also on the receiving end of Inés's punches and scratches (27r, 28r, 30r). Despite the well-documented violence, not all facets of their abusive relationship were perceived as negative. The women close to Inés and Catalina, such as María de Rojas (a servant in the convent with Inés), testified that the couple "fought sometimes and other times they got along very well" (21v).³⁰ Another neighbor testified that the women would argue but later go back to being friends, speaking lovingly to each other (29r).

Despite the moments of peace, Inés seemed most threatened by the real or imagined affairs between Catalina and other men. Catalina testified that when she was conversing with a man in church, Inés had shown up with a knife and threatened her, saying, "You cheating whore, I've got a knife to cut your face." This had "caused a great scandal and upheaval among the people who were in the church and saw the boldness of Inés" (17v).³¹ When Inés was questioned by the authorities about her jealousy and her efforts to control Catalina when they were living together (such as not wanting her to talk to men or to the neighbors, and not letting her stand by the window), Inés confessed that it was true that she had "kept a watchful eye over Catalina, but only because of the dangerous people who lived in the neighborhood" (9v).³²

Despite their efforts to pass as an aunt and her niece (a plausible lie that would have allowed them to express certain intimacies in public, and to rent a room or bed without suspicion), news about their prosecution for sodomy in Valladolid and Salamanca eventually spread. In fact, some neighbors testified that the bond between the two women was so strong that efforts to separate them were futile. Catalina de Céspedes described how her husband had tried to break up the same-sex couple but was unsuccessful. Others had tried as well, "seeing them so close, but nobody has been powerful enough to separate them, even though they had been punished for their relationship" (24v).³³ Catalina de León testified that she had suspected that they were living in sin as if they were a man and a woman, and had heard that they had been punished for sodomy using an instrument in Valladolid and then arrested for the same crime in Salamanca. She also confirmed that many

people had tried to keep them apart, not to mention the great scandal and gossip that was circulating as a result (26v).

Given the number of women who testified about the high-profile nature of the lesbian relationship, it is not surprising that neighbors insulted Inés and Catalina to their faces by shouting “*bujarronas*,” to which they reportedly did not respond—which bystanders then interpreted as confirmation of the accusations (4v). The pejorative name-calling was not limited to the hostile neighbors and witnesses. Other testimony indicates that Inés and Catalina (as well as other women implicated in same-sex relations) also insulted one another by shouting names at each other in public, such as *puta bellaca* (cheating whore), *somética* (sodomite), *bellaca baldresera* (dildo-wielding scoundrel), and so forth. While it was documented by seventeen female witnesses (through investigation, interviews, and torture conducted by male authorities) that Inés and Catalina maintained a sexual relationship, the encounters between the two after their “breakup” are noteworthy for the dramatic conflict and abusive violence. In fact, the limited research that has been done on partner abuse in lesbian relationships in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries reveals some interesting correlations to the testimony against Inés (who is represented as the abuser while Catalina is described as the victim). Lesbian battering is frequently defined as a “pattern of violent [or] coercive behaviors whereby a lesbian seeks to control the thoughts, beliefs, or conduct of her intimate partner or to punish the intimate for resisting the perpetrator’s control” (Hart, 173; see also Renzetti, 7).

If the female witnesses and the testimony of Catalina provide reliable information about the dynamics between Inés and Catalina, then surely their relationship would be described today in terms of domestic violence. If we compare the results of Claire Renzetti’s study of lesbian partner abuse to the characterizations of the relations between Inés and Catalina, we discover that many of the main features in same-sex domestic violence are consistent despite the divergent contexts. Renzetti cites dependency, jealousy, and an imbalance of power as key factors related to partner abuse (55). The dependency and jealousy are usually evident in efforts to create a “closed system” that discourages contact with people outside the relationship. Even Inés confesses to this dynamic—yet she justifies her control over Catalina through her concern for safety. If we examine the imbalance of power and its relationship to intimate violence in their partnership, we might speculate about the role of age and economics. Although it is difficult to conclude with any certainty the exact ages of Inés and Catalina (each offered contradictory accounts of their ages in different testimonies), it seems apparent that Inés was considerably older than her partner. At one point, Catalina claimed she

was fifteen years old; Inés said in one interview that she was a thirty-five-year-old *beata*, but later claimed that she was forty-three years old (AGS, 41v).³⁴ Whatever the truth about their ages, the difference was notable and apparently facilitated the “aunt-niece” façade they were known to use in order to conceal their sexual partnership. Perhaps the imbalance in ages played a role in their disputes over financial concerns. Witnesses (as well as Catalina) claimed that Inés tried to convince her to return to their relationship with promises of economic and material security. Similarly, most witnesses recalling the violent fights between the two cited specific arguments over particular articles of clothing, money owed to the other party, and perceived loss of wealth as a result of the long-term partnership.

Perhaps it was the public nature of the volatile interactions between Inés and Catalina that gave the latter the impetus to go to the Real Chancillería to report the violence that Inés had inflicted upon her:

She went to the office of the Royal Appeals Court and she told a lawyer (Mr. Parra) what had happened, about being harassed by Inés de Santa Cruz, saying she wanted to appear before the mayors to make a complaint about the physical abuse perpetrated by Inés de Santa Cruz and about how she wouldn't leave her alone. The lawyer Parra told her to calm down and that she should get a job as a servant in an honorable home, which she did. (18v)³⁵

One wonders whether Catalina believed that the mayors would protect her from her ex-lover, or if the documented visit was to strengthen her position as victim if the two were investigated again for female sodomy. In presenting the case of violence, Catalina also established an official record of her attempt to avoid Inés. Apparently she was less fearful of implicating herself in going to the local authorities with information about an ex-girlfriend than she was about future conflict with Inés.

Despite extensive testimony that confirmed the two women's use of an instrument when having sexual relations, Inés and Catalina escaped the death penalty during two trials. The seemingly lenient punishment, nonetheless, cannot erase or minimize the compelling details and the evidence of how numerous people (more than a dozen witnesses—many more than normally required for a sodomy conviction—as well as Inés and Catalina themselves) perceived their long-term romantic partnership. In this way, the one hundred folios of documentation (compared to the seven folios of Ana Aler and Mariana López's case) of this widely recognized same-sex relationship belies the idea that lesbians were invisible, tolerated, or insignificant.

A SAME-SEX COUPLE IN NEW GRANADA

Extant court records reveal the remarkable duration of same-sex relationships between women in New Granada (Colombia) during the early modern period.³⁶ One such case in 1745 involved the long-term relationship between Margarita Valenzuela and Gregoria Franco, two mestiza seamstresses. Margarita was in her early twenties and the mother of a child as the result of a sexual encounter she had had seven years earlier with a man named Javier Núñez, whom she hadn't seen since the affair. Gregoria, on the other hand, was twenty-six years old and single with no children. The surviving testimony offers glimpses of two women who had shared a stable romance (Giraldo Botero, 42). A neighbor recounts seeing the women celebrate openly at a festival in 1743, dancing and drinking all night ("no man approached them") and walking home arm-in-arm (Rodríguez, 104).

Like the conflict between Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma, however, the threat of heterosexual relations between Margarita and another man motivated Gregoria's acts of jealousy and violence against her partner. When Margarita's ex-lover Javier suddenly appeared at her doorstep on August 13, 1745, expressing an interest in reconciliation, Margarita made efforts to explain to Gregoria why she could not simply turn away her daughter's father. Not surprisingly, the hetero/homosexual triangle instigated an argument between the two women. Gregoria was incensed by Margarita's willingness to let Javier stay in her home. Margarita, for her part, seemed to use Javier as a way to make Gregoria jealous (as when she asked the latter to "come to my house tonight so that there will be no way that Javier will try to get in my bed").³⁷

Infuriated by what she perceived as Margarita's games, Gregoria took up the invitation, but the night resulted in violence rather than lovemaking, as Gregoria stormed into the house and stabbed Margarita with a sword (Rodríguez, 104). Not surprisingly, Gregoria later tried to excuse the violence, claiming that it was a stupid joke and that she was just trying to scare Margarita (105). Among the multiple versions of the incident, some neighbors testified that they had heard Gregoria shouting blasphemous insults against the Virgin Mary, which the mayor requested not be transcribed in the documents due to "their horrendous sound" [*su horrendo sonido*] (104).

Once Margarita recovered from her wounds, and after the investigation of the incident (and their relationship), Gregoria Franco was banished from the town of Popayán. The short-term sentence (only four months of banishment) was intended to separate the two lovers, and Gregoria was warned that if the women were to reunite in the future, she would be

banished permanently.³⁸ Like Inés and Catalina, Margarita had also been exiled for “public acts of sodomy” a few years prior to the 1745 investigation (Rodríguez, 103).

A similarly lenient punishment was issued to Inés de Santa Cruz, who was eventually granted a pardon in 1625 that rescinded the sentence of perpetual banishment, allowing her to return to Spain from Portugal (Monter, 317). Given the complicated and intriguing nature of the case against Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina de Lesdesma, and the complex ways in which their relationship also suggests possible links among lesbian relations, prostitution, and correctional homes, the confusion and ambiguities attending the legal proceedings and the punitive measures are only to be expected.

ESPERANZA DE ROJAS AND LESBIAN SORCERY

In 1597, the Inquisitional tribunal of Mallorca found a thirty-year-old unmarried woman from Valencia named Esperanza de Rojas guilty of blasphemous and heretical statements and activities.³⁹ Rojas had confessed to creating an altar to the devil during her temporary residency at the Casa de la Piedad (House of Piety), a Magdalene home for delinquent women, as well as practicing love magic in hopes that two women (with whom she had already had sexual relations in the home) would become enflamed with passion for her once again. Rojas was sentenced to two hundred lashes and permanent exile from the kingdom, a lenient punishment since the tribunal believed she had committed her errors in a state of anger.

At first glance, the case against Rojas seems to deviate from the hetero-centric discourse that dominated most early modern works on sorcery and witchcraft, magic, and female criminality. But, filtered through the Inquisitional narrative and combined with contemporary fictional and historical texts on demonology, witches, and female sexual deviance, Rojas's case reveals a pattern. She was not the first woman who had hoped to use dark arts to attract other women. As such, Rojas's experience fits a larger history of nontraditional sexuality too often ignored in studies on early modern witchcraft, magic, and demonology.

The summary of Rojas's trial reveals a complex intersection of performance, ethnicity, and sexuality. Consistent with other Inquisitional investigations, the same-sex love magic performed through the ritualistic incantations was reconstructed through seven witness accounts. According to extant testimony, Rojas had denied the existence of God and of the saints and stated that only the devil could help her. The report describes how she had removed the religious images from her room but kept the one that had a figure of the devil at the bottom (perhaps a portrait of Saint Michael treading on Satan).

It was understood that in front of the demonic image, she had performed her superstitious prayers and conjurations. According to the witnesses, once the stage was set, the ritual consisted of Rojas lighting a fire, throwing salt into it, and

moving her lips, as if she were praying, she hit the ground with her hand three times and made motions over the fire, which was a straight line, [and this she did] six times and then she hit the ground three times with her heel and using a cup she threw a whole fistful of salt into the fire and lighting a candle while looking at the sky through an open window she mumbled something that they couldn't understand and when they asked her what she was doing she responded that it would bring much help and placing her thumb in the palm of her hand, making circles, she moved it as if she were measuring her arm, and she continued measuring until returning to the same hand. She did this three times, and when asked what she was saying, she said that they were Jewish prayers and some from the Moors. And while looking at a star she would say, "Oh star, star that moves through the sky, help me in my time of need," like someone else might say, "God, help me in my time of need," and when a mosquito flew past her she would say that help for her efforts would come soon. And burning some coals, she would say that she was enflaming the hearts of certain women whom she loved and with whom she had had carnal relations. (248v–49r)⁴⁰

This portion of the trial summary reveals how the witnesses apparently perceived, participated in, and later narrated Rojas's enactment of the love spell while answering the Inquisitors' questions. According to the record, when Rojas performed her ritual, the spectators had asked her to explain the meaning of both her actions and her words.

The second part of the narrative summarizes and filters Rojas's own account, which repeated (at times word for word) the Inquisitors' interpretation of the witness testimony. Undoubtedly, the repetition sought to confirm the veracity and consistency of the accounts prompted during the Inquisition interviews while underscoring the performance of the lesbian love magic. While this particular case of *philocaptio* conjury was same-sex, the ritualistic elements in Rojas's actions and words were consistent with other Inquisition records of women who used sorcery for sexual purposes during the early modern period in Valencia and elsewhere.⁴¹

Rojas's case evoked divergent religious traditions as well. Islamic, Christian, and Jewish beliefs all appeared in the case summary.⁴² Rejecting the Catholic tradition (first through her removal of Christian images and

then through her declarations judged “heretical, blasphemous, and strongly suspicious of heresy”), Rojas aligned herself with both Jewish and Islamic traditions, reciting Jewish prayers “and some from the Moors” and then declaring that “if the Moors came she would give herself to them” (249).⁴³ Yet despite her invocations of alternative theological possibilities, the Inquisitors interpreted the love spells in terms of Christian beliefs: “Moving her lips, *as if she were praying*, . . . she would say, ‘Oh star, star that moves through the sky, help me in my time of need,’ *like one would say*, ‘God, help me in my time of need.’ . . . And she said to one star, ‘Oh star, star, that moves through the sky, help me in my time of need,’ *as one who says*, ‘God, help me in my time of need’” (248v–249r; emphases mine).⁴⁴

When the defendant admitted to having traveled to Rome and Naples (where she had learned the ritual and incantations from another woman), she provided fodder for those who sought to control and enclose wayward women, who were believed to corrupt other women on the loose. The fact that Rojas had learned her love magic in Rome and Naples would not be surprising for the Inquisitors, since both cities (while important centers for the Holy Office) were known as urban areas with reputations for facilitating sexual sin and harboring Jewish communities (Hroch and Skybová, 99–102).⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, Rojas’s heresy and sorcery, which she implicitly attributed to a tradition of astrology, superstition, and necromancy from Moorish and Jewish culture, might also have been interpreted as a link to her unknown ancestry and lineage.

Despite the Inquisitors’ attempt to criminalize Rojas through ethnic and religious markers recurrent in the narrative, the trial summary ends with Rojas’s assessment of life in the correctional home. She incriminates the home as a place that breeds sin instead of correcting it: It “might even make the residents not believe in God. . . . She believed that the devil brought her to the home to make her sin more and that he would help her” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 860, 249v).⁴⁶

Rojas was not the only resident of the Casa de la Piedad accused of having sexual relations with other women in the home when investigated by the Inquisition of Mallorca between December 1597 and December 1598. Catalina Lebrés (a twenty-eight-year-old married woman of old Christian ancestry) was convicted of pronouncing “heretical, apostatic, idolatrous, and blasphemous heresies, invoking demons and being suspected of heresy, scandalous, evil statements that offend pious ears” (251v).⁴⁷ In addition to practicing sorcery, Lebrés had “participated in illicit relations with other female residents” (251v).⁴⁸ While Catalina’s magic spells were not defined in terms of specific love purposes, the negative influence of her attitudes and actions on the other residents was indicated in the trial summary:

And when a resident wanted to close a window, Catalina told her not to close it since she was waiting for a star and she had asked another resident for some candles to perform the candle prayer, which is prohibited by the Holy Office. Also, she had persuaded another woman in the home to devote herself to the devil, that he would help her. She also would make fun of the other residents who took communion and prayed often, calling them “varnished saints.” (251r–v)⁴⁹

DISCIPLINARY INSTITUTIONS FOR WOMEN IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

The summaries of the Inquisition trials in Mallorca from 1597 to 1598 describe Casa de la Piedad as the home “where they place women who do not live a chaste and virtuous life, including married women as well as unmarried, and who usually only stay for a limited period” (246r). Given the nature of this correctional home, it is not surprising that a central theme that emerges from both fictional and historical documents related to the issue of delinquent women is the threat of unorthodox sexual activity between men and women. Prostitution, in particular, became one of the most pressing concerns for moral and public health, as sex workers in legal brothels were seen by some as a necessary evil to help alleviate a syphilis epidemic as well as “to divert males from more serious sins of homosexuality, incest, adultery, and propositioning honest women” (Perry, *Gender*, 137). Clandestine prostitutes and other *vagabundas* (women wandering about in cities such as Seville) were rounded up into a home where they were enclosed and expected to earn their keep by the work of their hands (*ibid.*, 141). The prostitutes who decided to renounce their “sinful” lives were sent to a convent or a Magdalene house (a transition shelter for ex-prostitutes). As we saw earlier, Inés de Santa Cruz took advantage of this practice by claiming to gather wayward women to her home in order to facilitate their transition to a convent, but her neighbors and officials decided that her actions were part of a deceitful façade for illicit sexual activity.

Given the spiritual mission of the official homes sanctioned by the church and state, prostitutes from the brothels were forced to attend special sermons designed to convert sinners. Similarly, one of the goals of the home where Rojas and Lebrés had been placed was to instruct the “fallen” women in religious doctrine. According to the tribunal narratives describing the testimonies of other defendants living in Casa de la Piedad, there was resistance to being locked up as well as to the discipline and religious agenda enforced by the home: “All these women strongly demanded the freedom to love whom they wanted and to think what they wanted. Some hoped to be freed

from being locked up or for someone to come and save them, and others, those who had traveled the most, would organize their sex lives with other women in confinement. According to their own statements, they repeat that being locked up and the rigid schedule of the home ‘tried to make them Christians by force’” (Pérez Escotado, 132).⁵⁰ When Javier Pérez Escotado notes how the residents’ statements implicate the religious home for promoting further female delinquency, he also implies that lesbian desire may depend on exposure and instruction. In other words, those women who had traveled extensively had had more opportunities to learn about non-traditional sexual activities, which they could then introduce to other women in the correctional home.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the problem of female delinquency necessitated new plans for special prisons for female criminals. Accordingly, Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera (a physician for the king’s galleys) wrote a proposal describing a workhouse for fallen or criminal women—one that would generate funds to support the institution as well as provide the women with necessary skills to earn a living when released. Around the same time, Madre Magdalena de San Jerónimo also drafted a proposal for a women’s prison, but her recommendations were for not “a safe haven but incarceration and harsh discipline” for female prostitutes, thieves, sorceresses, madams, and other deviants, as she believed that Valladolid’s only institution devoted to “aiding fallen women, San Felipe de la Penitencia, had become too lax” (Lehfeldt, 29).⁵¹ Unlike the physical structure of the House of Piety (as well as the purported behavior of its residents), Magdalena de San Jerónimo’s vision for the new prison included no windows, and women who swore or blasphemed were to be gagged.

Madre Magdalena’s justification for the urgent need for a disciplinary prison emphasizes the sexually predatory nature of recalcitrant women (“When night falls, they go out of their caves like savage beasts on the hunt” [Magdalena de San Jerónimo, 71]), but her blueprint for the jail does not reflect any concern for possible same-sex activity by these unruly women.⁵² Despite the communal sleep area, Magdalena associates nocturnal restlessness in the prison not with sexual activity but rather with conflict, describing how the women frequently become embroiled in fights with guards or other inmates:

It is also recommended that at night some of the more unruly women sleep in chains or in the pillory, as is done with some galley slaves, so that they won’t be thinking about where they can go or how they can attack the officials or fight with other women and do as much evil as possible. I know these women well, I have dealt with them for years, and since the

devil is their lord and is so angry that they have been snatched away from his grip, he will be tempting them to do much evil and until the punishment domesticates these women, they will be crazed. (85–86)⁵³

Given that her correctional facility sought to rehabilitate disobedient women, one can only imagine that the slightest suggestion that an all-female space might facilitate illicit relations would prove counterproductive for her proposal to the king.⁵⁴

And yet despite the heterosexual focus on the female criminals' sexuality, other texts (like Esperanza de Rojas's narrative) reveal a different option for same-sex eroticism in the prisons. Around the same time that Pérez de Herrera and Madre Magdalena were drafting their proposals for new prisons for women (and Rojas was being punished by the Inquisition in Mallorca), Cristóbal de Chaves wrote a report titled *Relación de las cosas de la cárcel de Sevilla y su trato* (Account of the State of the Jail in Seville and Its Treatment). Among his findings are details related to the unruly behavior of the female prisoners. Not only do the women talk like the male criminals, but according to Chaves, they also imitate the men's sexual activities by using artificial penises or strap-on dildos: "And there are many women who want to be more like men than Nature intended. Many women have been punished in the prison for making themselves into 'roosters' with an instrument made into the shape of a penis, which they tied to themselves with straps. Such women are punished with two hundred lashes" (25–26).⁵⁵ With this description of penetrative lesbian erotics, Chaves's report provides the authorities with a specific idea of what might be practiced in other cases of "carnal relations," such as the nonspecified sexual activities between Rojas and the other women in the correctional home in Mallorca.

By the mid-seventeenth century, the state officials' crackdown on female vagrancy and delinquency in Madrid resulted in overcrowding in the women's jails. The crisis prompted Jerónimo de Barrionuevo to recommend future expansions to the women's prison: "They arrested a group of vagrant women wandering around, and led ten and twenty at a time, handcuffed, to jail. The women's prison is chock-full, and they can't even fit standing up. If this overcrowding continues, it will be necessary to make expansions to the building or else get more wood for the fire for those who will be sentenced to burn, if they are not saved" (253).⁵⁶

Despite efforts to reform female criminals through stricter correctional institutions during the seventeenth century, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the overcrowded and underfunded women's jails were seen as breeding grounds for illicit behavior, as evident in one report requesting funding from the king:

Regarding daily concerns, their sleeping arrangement is reduced to a bad mattress and a blanket, and for a bed, the floor, with two or three women sleeping together. . . . Consider, Your Majesty, seventy or eighty women locked up together in these two jails—because of their sins or their nature (which is the case with most of them), they are the scum of the Republic, raised with complete freedom, without any guidance, accustomed to a licentious life, running around free through the streets. . . . One may believe that this chaos only breeds crimes, cursing, blasphemy, hatred, false testimony against each other, conversations, and illicit acts, becoming a Sodom of perversion (discovered on more than a few occasions) that makes the women's prison a living image of hell. (quoted in Domínguez Ortiz, 282–83)⁵⁷

Like Roja's comment in her case summary, the report expresses fear that the jails are actually teaching women more crimes than they knew before entering the prison: "She enters only knowing about one crime but leaves instructed on many more" (283).⁵⁸ In being perhaps less specific with its mention of "illicit acts" than Chaves in his description of the strap-on dildos used by female prisoners in Seville at the end of the sixteenth century, the eighteenth-century report of the "Sodom of perversion" leaves to the reader's imagination the details of how these same-sex erotic activities were enacted.⁵⁹

A similar fear of female homoeroticism in the *recogimiento* (correctional home) of Santa María Magdalena de la Penitencia in Madrid undoubtedly led the administrators to specify in their governing rules of 1692 that "under no circumstance are they to permit two women to sleep together . . . and that any infraction would be seriously punished" (*Reglas y constituciones para las hermanas*, 17r).⁶⁰ Like most of the rules and regulations for the all-female communities in convents, the rules for the Real Casa de Santa María Magdalena de la Penitencia (which had been founded for "Sinful and Repentant Women" [169]) instruct the prioress to be vigilant in preventing the residents from forming any particular friendships, and against allowing any special affection (which can cause jealousy and other damage to the community), and that anyone found guilty of these relationships should be severely punished with jail, *disciplina de rueda* (wheel punishment), and similar measures (25). Under the category of "Grave Faults and their Punishment," the rules provide more specific examples of the special friendships that are to be punished with jail time for anyone found guilty of the "sin of illicit behavior or any scandalous act, or any special friendship between residents that would also cause scandal for the house . . . [such as] talking at night, together in one of their cells, or sleeping together" (161).

The house had begun in 1601 as a refuge for "wayward" women, and by

1637 the administrators had begun building a new house due to overcrowding (Recio, 9–10). A similar home, the Real Monasterio de San Felipe de la Penitencia de Valladolid, had been founded in 1542 in Valladolid for women who wanted to separate from their sinful lives. In the governing rules for the Valladolid convent for repentant women (published in 1572), the residents are instructed not to talk about their past lives, presumably to avoid rekindling old behaviors and feelings as well as to prevent inspiring new sinful possibilities in the other penitent residents (Carracedo Falagán, 269). In chapter 23, “On the Bedroom,” the rules specify that each nun must sleep in a bedroom without a door, but that no one is allowed to enter if the nun is present, and furthermore, that “two nuns are not permitted to sleep together in the same bed for any reason” (quoted in Carracedo Falagán, 284).⁶¹

In fact, a home for repentant women (i.e., ex-prostitutes) had been established in the fourteenth century in Rojas’s hometown of Valencia: Casa de Arrepentidas de Valencia, which became the Convent of San Gregorio in 1600. Its governing rules (published in 1601) noted that the residents were not allowed to sleep together, hug each other, join their faces together, or fall into the sin of sensuality (170, 172). In addition to the correctional monasteries founded in Madrid, Valencia, and Valladolid, other homes for repentant women were opened in Seville (1550 and 1613), Zaragoza (1593 and 1622), Málaga (1587, 1681, 1682, and 1792), Cádiz (1678), Salamanca (1648), Barcelona (1581 and 1700), Alicante (1743), and Orihuela (1749) (see Almeda).

PROSTITUTION AND LESBIAN SEXUALITY

In the fifth of his *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, Lucian writes of a woman from Lesbos who seduces Leaena, who is living with Megilla, who in turn is married to a woman from Corinth. Clonarium confirms that in Lesbos there are many such women (Boswell, *Christianity*, 83). As the historian John Boswell noted, prostitutes are similarly represented in what might be regarded as lesbian activity in Alciphron’s *Letters of Courtesans* (83n108). Prostitution and lesbian sexuality have been linked since antiquity.

The connection between prostitutes and same-sex attraction was a matter of public discussion during the Renaissance. Agnolo Firenzuola’s 1548 dialogue *On the Beauty of Women*, based on Plato’s *Symposium*, features a monologue delivered by Firenzuola on human nature and female sexuality. He distinguishes between spiritual, pure lesbian love and lascivious, carnal lesbian love:

Those which had been female in both halves, or are descended from such, love each other’s beauty, some in purity and holiness, as the fair

Laodamia Forteguerra loves the illustrious Margaret of Austria; others foully, as Sappho the Lesbian among the ancients, and in our own time, the great courtesan Cecilia Venetiana at Rome. These by nature scorn marriage, and flee from converse with men. And of these we may suppose are they who of their own will become nuns, and of their own will remain so; and they are few." (translation quoted in Jacqueline Murray, "Agnolo," 208)

This brief passage suggests widespread public discussion of same-sex relations among women. Here Firenzuola seems to "out" at least three women who were contemporaries of his readers. Despite the positive spin on Forteguerra's relationship with the Spanish royal Margaret of Austria, the reference to their same-sex desire in the same sentence as the lascivious desire of the infamous prostitute Cecilia Venetiana and the famous lesbian Sappho invites the reader to assume that the attraction between the aristocrats was passionate, regardless of the absence of an explicit physicality that would have rendered it disgraceful.⁶² Likewise, Firenzuola must have assumed that his readers would also be aware of Cecilia Venetiana's sexual experience with other women, despite the lack of other historical references to corroborate his claim (Jacqueline Murray, "Agnolo," 210).⁶³

Explicitly acknowledging the "open secret" of these sixteenth-century women from opposite socioeconomic circles, Firenzuola reveals an understanding of lesbian desire that encompasses a wide range of features—from chaste attraction to impure sexual behaviors (see Eisenbichler, 278). Firenzuola's description of lesbians also indicates the perception of a certain "type" or identity, as opposed to a mere sexual behavior or activity. The Italian is aware that the nature of these women has an impact on their life choices, as is evident by their preference for the all-female community of the convent, given that they "willingly become nuns and willingly remain so, and they are few, because the majority of women are kept in monasteries by force and live there in despair" (translation quoted in Eisenbichler, 277). Implied in Firenzuola's discussion is that female homosexual impulses can appear just as easily in "heterosexual" noblewomen (such as Laodamia and Margaret, who both had been married to men) as those who, like Cecilia, participate in criminal heterosexual commerce. In his inclusive passage, the author describes other lesbians as "separatists" who reject men and marriage, opting instead to become nuns in the female-only space of the monastery.

A century after the 1541 publication of Firenzuola's treatise (as well as other contemporary references to Laudomia's passion for Margaret), discussion of the lesbian rumors (and the exact nature of Margaret and Laudomia's friendship) continued with the publication of Brantôme's 1665–1666

Lives of Gallant Ladies, written circa 1584 or half a century before.⁶⁴ The author summarizes Firenzuola's passage and then uses the character of a male reader, Monsieur du Gua, to question the veracity of the insistence that their relationship was "pure and holy":

Hereupon did Monsieur du Gua criticize the author, saying 'twas a falsehood that the said fair lady, Marguerite of Austria, did love the other fair dame of a pure and holy love. For seeing she had taken up her rather than others which might well be equally fair and virtuous as she, 'twas to be supposed it was to use her for her pleasures, neither more no less than other women that do the like. Only to cover up her naughtiness, she did say and publish abroad how that her love for her was a pure and holy love, as we see many of her fellows do, which do dissemble their lewdness with suchlike words. (translation quoted in Castle, 169)

In fact, Brantôme invites further debate over whether this intimate relationship was carnal or spiritual: "This was what Monsieur du Gua did remark thereanent; and if any man doth wish to discuss the matter farther, well! He is at liberty to do so" (*ibid.*). While Brantôme refrains from weighing in on the "is she or isn't she" question, the fact that he devotes almost twenty percent of his chapter on lesbian practices to Margaret, her life, and her relationship with Laudomia suggests more than a passing interest in the topic.

In a much more explicitly condemnatory passage, Brantôme claims firsthand knowledge of a Spanish prostitute in Rome who maintained a sexual relationship with another prostitute, even after her lover had married a man:

I knew once a courtesan of Rome, old and wily if ever there was one, that was named Isabella de Luna, a Spanish woman, which did take in this sort of friendship another courtesan named Pandora. This latter was eventually married to a butler in the Cardinal d'Armaignac's household, but without abandoning her first calling. Now this same Isabella did keep her, and extravagant and ill-ordered as she was in speech, I have oft times heard her say how that she did cause her to give her husbands more horns than all the wild fellows she had ever had. I know not in what sense she did intend this, unless she did follow the meaning of the epigram of Martial just referred to. (translation quoted in Castle, 166)⁶⁵

Brantôme leaves no doubt that Martial's meaning in epigram 119 is clear: women who sleep together are adulteresses who "make their husbands cuckold" (*ibid.*). Perhaps the French writer's fascination with Margaret has

more to do with the “hidden agenda” of his anti-Spanish, anti-Hapsburg bias. Unlike Brantôme, no contemporary writer suggested that Margaret loved Laudomia, but rather that Laudomia was in love with Margaret (see Eisenbichler, 293). In this way, the seventeenth-century French writer manipulates references to lesbian attraction that had previously been evoked by sixteenth-century writers such as Alessandro Piccolomini to showcase same-sex passion between women as a superior form of love due to its nonprocreative nature: “Nor, may it please God, is the Love, which I will speak about today with the reverence that is appropriate to it, the same as that love that we have in common with the beasts and leads us and pushes us to procreate. . . . I will give you an example of a most ardent Love that exists in our time not between a man and a woman, no, but between two most unique and most divine women” (translation quoted in Eisenbichler, 284).

Unlike Brantôme’s “gossipy anecdotes,” which describe how lesbian practices and prostitution are a threat to heterosexual marriage, Fray Gabriel de Maqueda’s 1622 treatise *Invectiva en forma de discurso contra el uso de las casas publicas de las mugeres ramera*s (Invective against the Use of Legal Brothels) opposes legalized prostitution on more general grounds, by linking prostitution, male homosexuality, lesbian activity, and sorcery (despite the fact that others justified legal brothels as a way of preventing homosexuality).⁶⁶ More interestingly, Maqueda also argues that prostitutes are likely to turn men into real or latent homosexuals, stating that “the brothels are schools of this nefarious evil and the prostitutes are the teachers of this repulsive sin” (19v), and that men “become inflamed with these nefarious desires, and to commit disgusting acts with other men” (20v).⁶⁷

Like other moralists of the era, Maqueda takes it for granted that prostitutes are likely to practice lesbian love: “These women usually sin with one another in a disgusting way, which is also considered to be sodomy according to all the theologians who agree with Saint Thomas” (20).⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, these lesbian prostitutes who incite men to sodomy are experts in witchcraft, making the brothel the workplace of the devil: “Saint John Chrysostom . . . calls these brothels the public offices of the devil—caves of vipers, snakes, and dragons—so one can understand that there one finds and is shown all the poisons of the soul, which are the sins . . . and from this, sorcery is born, because most of the prostitutes are sorceresses and cheaters” (27).⁶⁹

Surely readers of that time would have made a cultural link from Maqueda’s description of prostitution, sexual vice, and sorcery to the number one best-selling work of fiction during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain, *La Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*, more commonly known as *La Celestina*. And while Fernando de Rojas’s work follows the tragic story of heterosexual desire between Calisto and Melibea, at the core of the dia-

logued novel is the old bawd Celestina, who is known as an ex-prostitute, sorceress, procuress, and savvy business woman.⁷⁰

Considering the cultural assumption that subversive practices attracted other forbidden behavior, it is not unexpected that Esperanza de Rojas's historical case shares some important characteristics with her fictional predecessor Celestina. While Esperanza de Rojas uses love magic in an attempt to manipulate two women in the correctional home to resume same-sex relations with her, Celestina uses her powers as sorceress to inflame Melibea's passion for Calisto. However, regardless of her heterosexual business deals, Celestina herself is not exempt from her own feelings of desire for the same sex. In act 7, Celestina displays openly her homoerotic attraction for the younger prostitute Areúsa through both words and actions.⁷¹ Once Celestina announces herself as one "who, old as she is, is enamored of you, darling" (Singleton translation, 119), she then proceeds to fondle Areúsa, who is sick in bed with menstrual cramps.⁷² Based on Areúsa's comment, "I feel the pain higher, in my stomach," we can assume that Celestina's hand had gone straight to the younger prostitute's private parts. Upon being directed elsewhere, the old bawd exclaims, "Oh, let me get my fill of looking at you—you are *so* lovely! It delights my old heart! . . . What breasts! What loveliness! . . . Oh, if I were only a man to be allowed thus to enjoy the sight of you!" (119–21).⁷³

Given the unabashed eroticism of Celestina's expressed physical attraction to Areúsa, it is not unexpected that despite (or perhaps because of) the overwhelming popularity of the text among general readers, early modern moralists singled this work out as being particularly dangerous for impressionable female readers. Fray Luis de Alarcón, for example, had warned in 1547 that "demonic" books like *La Celestina* could teach readers new lessons about sin that they otherwise would not have known: "No one can love or desire what he or she doesn't know, and the more people learn and have it portrayed before their eyes, the more they are inclined to do it. From this we find that the more representations people have of lustful things from interior acts such as thoughts and desires or exterior acts of carnal sin, the more apt they are to practice them" (quoted in Antonio de Santa María, 52).

Here the religious literary critic's comments about a sexual behavior that might not have occurred to the naïve reader could certainly refer to any of the erotic scenes in *La Celestina*, including the episode portraying a woman lusting for another woman. Furthermore, the ecclesiastic recognizes that sexual desire has to do not only with carnal acts but with sensory perceptions awakened through a rich web of interior thoughts, feelings, desires, and fantasy. The possibility that the "lesbian" scene in *La Celestina* might have made the censors fearful of its potential arousal quotient (for both male and

female readers) is suggested by the fact that in 1609 an Inquisition censor (Juan Angel de Andrada) deleted the following homoerotic confession of the old bawd from the seventh act of the same play:

I thought you were good-looking before, seeing only the surface, but now I can tell you that in this whole city, so far as I know, there aren't three such figures as yours! You don't look a day over fifteen! I wish I were a man and could look at you! By God, you're committing a sin not to share your beauty with those who love you! God didn't give you such youthful freshness to hide under six layers of wool and linen. (Simpson translation, 86)⁷⁴

Juan Luis Vives's sixteenth-century manual *The Education of a Christian Woman* is specifically concerned about the impact of books like *La Celestina* on female readers: "I marvel that wise fathers permit this to their daughters, husbands concede it to their wives, and public morals and institutions ignore the fact that women become addicted to vice through reading. . . . If they are read for that reason [to arouse women who show resistance], it would be better to write books on the art of whoring" (Fantazzi translation, 74, 76). Aware of the power of female homoeroticism on both men and women, Vives mentions Sappho among the poets to avoid for their sinful lessons on love (citing Ovid's *The Remedy of Love*): "Reluctantly I say, eschew the poets of love. / I cast away my own poetic gift, for shame! / Beware Callimachus, no enemy of love, / and the Coan bard can also do you harm, / *Sappho surely made me please my mistress more*" (77; emphasis mine).

Not surprisingly, critics continue to debate the actual motivation behind Celestina's homoerotic desire in act 7. Dorothy Severin argues that Celestina's erotic praise of Areúsa is merely to excite Pármeno, who is waiting outside the door for his turn. Nonetheless, Severin does not deny a possible underlying lesbian desire on the part of the old bawd (202). Other critics see the erotic scene in act 7 as Celestina's ploy to excite Areúsa for heterosexual relations with Pármeno: "Celestina attempts to arouse the young woman . . . by fondling her under her bedclothes—supposedly in an attempt to alleviate her menstrual pains—and in the process is clearly aroused herself" (Weber, 134). Israel Burshatin likewise identifies the manipulation as well as the complexity of the relationships between women healers and their female patients: "Butch Celestina is a surrogate penis, a momentary stand-in for Pármeno; motherly Celestina, in her best bedside manner, now gives voice to a tradition of female healers and rewrites the phallocratic narrative" ("Written," 445–46). While the medical community had long believed that genital stimulation to orgasm could relieve menstrual cramps or other "womb diseases," physicians such as

Pieter van Foreest (1653) recommended this technique only for “widows, those who live chaste lives, and female religious” and not for “very young women, public women, or married women” (translation quoted in Maines, 1). Accordingly, the prostitute Areúsa would not make an appropriate candidate for this cure. In fact, the homoerotic massage scene in *La Celestina* may have contributed to the move to criminalize female healers during the early modern period, since Celestina’s performance (whether sincere or not) demonstrates how female health providers can delight in their women clients for their own pleasure (Dangler, “Transgendered,” 72).

Of course, the provocative scene in act 7 is not the only suggestion of Celestina’s homoaffective relationships. Surely the reader would have been suspicious of the protagonist’s close relationship in the past with her fellow witch companion Claudina: “His mother and I were like finger and fingernail. . . . We ate together, we slept together, had our good times and fun together” (62).⁷⁵ This suggestive friendship has also inspired conjecture about a possible liaison in the past between Celestina and Melibea’s mother Alisa: “We don’t know what the bawd and Alisa used to do together at ‘night’” (Cantalapiedra Erostate, 60).⁷⁶

And like Celestina’s statement to Areúsa, “If only I were a man” (described by Burshatin as the bawd’s “professional calling-card” in a world of compulsory heterosexuality), we see similar references in other female picaresque novels that followed the most popular fictional work of the early modern period. In Francisco Delicado’s *La Lozana andalusa* (*Portrait of Lozana the Lusty Andalusian Woman*), at the beginning of chapter 14 (famous for containing the most explicit scenes of sex between Lozana and her lover Rampin), the young male lover’s aunt expresses her attraction for the female rogue:

Aunt: Tell me, nephew, are you planning to sleep in there with Mistress Lozana? She hasn’t said anything to me about it. My God, but she has a beautiful body!

Rampin: You should have seen her undressed in the steambath.

Aunt: She looks so good to me that I wish I were a man. Oh what legs! (Damiani translation, 52)⁷⁷

It is not surprising, either, that Lozana herself takes pleasure from *La Celestina*. When Lozana asks Silvano to read to her from *La Celestina*—“I very much like to take my leisure by hearing these works read”—there is little doubt in her suggestive comment that the reading will be used as sexual stimulation: “And don’t forget your lute, and we’ll sound my tambourine” (205).⁷⁸

While the tremendously popular female picaresque novels expose details of illicit heterosexual commerce, they also reveal a multiplicity of vices and passions, including same-sex attraction. In this way, these texts become lessons on alternative desire—a way, as one recent critic aptly put it, “for learning to read the blanks of woman-identified experience and female-female desire” (Hutcheson, 254).

WITCHCRAFT AND LESBIAN DESIRE

Yet perhaps readers may not have been as shocked as clerics feared to see the frank comments describing same-sex desire between criminalized women. Numerous treatises on witchcraft and demonology during the early modern period noted that the naturally sinful nature of women allows the devil to easily tempt them into sexual vice. This weakness, the authors argued, explained why witches were much more likely to be women than men. And while the libidinous character of women is predominantly manifested in their desire for men (evident by the fact that the highly influential *Malleus Maleficarum* [Witches’ Hammer] describes heterosexual perversions at length but makes no explicit mention of same-sex desire between women), sexual activity among women *had* been referenced in certain works on heresy and later on witchcraft during the Middle Ages.⁷⁹ The fifteenth-century *Errores Gazariorum* (Errors of the Cathars), for example, details the sexual orgies of the heretical sect of Catharists, describing how after the feast, the lights are extinguished and the command of “*mestlet, mestlet*” (get in there and mix it up) is shouted, at which time “everyone falls lustfully upon his neighbor. Tinctoris is the only writer to specify that the orgies are homosexual,” since witches were more commonly associated with the traditions of incubus and succubus or sexual relations with the devil in the body of the opposite sex (Russell, 238–39). In medieval texts, as Jacqueline Murray observes, “sometimes accusations of lesbianism were accompanied by charges of witchcraft or heresy as well. The conceptual link between sexual deviance and spiritual deviance is clear: both were perceived as deliberate and willful challenges to the natural order established by God and nature” (“Twice,” 203).⁸⁰

Like prostitution, melancholy was also associated with witchcraft, demonic influences, and illicit sexual activity. Johann Weyer’s seminal treatise *De praestigiis daemonum* (On the Illusions of the Demons; published in 1583), for example, was instrumental in promulgating the idea that many women prosecuted for witchcraft were merely poor, weak, and socially marginalized women suffering from an impairment of the imagination caused by a melancholic temperament. His defense of women is based on “long-standing medical and humanist conceptions of melancholia—a pathology

linked, throughout its long history, to disturbances of the imagination" (Swan, 159). While Robert Burton also linked melancholy, witchcraft, and tribadism in his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, one of the most detailed descriptions of witches' participation in same-sex activity is found in *De praestigiis daemonum*. In the chapter titled "Concerning the sexual mingling of witches among themselves," Weyer describes these women as

Sahacat, which in Latin would be *Fricatrices* [women who rub], because they have sexual relations among themselves in damnable fashion—I would use more respectable language if I could. If on occasion attractive women come to them, the witches are inflamed with love just as young men are for girls, and, in the guise of the demon, they ask that the women lie with them as payment. And so it happens that while the women think they have obeyed the words of demons, they have actually had relations with witches. And there are some who are enticed by sexual pleasures of this sort, and who seek the society of witches; feigning illness, they summon one of the witches to themselves, or send their poor husband to get her. And the witch, who sees what is being done, states that the woman is vexed by some demon, and for that reason can in no way be freed until she joins the company of witches. (248–49)

Like other authors in early modern Europe, Weyer borrows this anecdote from the Spanish Moor Leo Africanus (born in Granada), who in the sixteenth century described the same-sex desire of witches (and some "fair women") in his *History and Description of Africa*. While some women are fooled into lesbian relations—"thinking thereby to fulfill the divels command they lie with the witches"—others seek them out willingly. To achieve these same-sex liaisons, both cheating wife and trickster witch must play a part in a performance aimed to deceive the unsuspecting husband:

Yea some there are, which being allured with the delight of this abominable vice, will desire the companie of these witches, and faining themselves to be sicke, will either call one of the witches home to them, or will send their husbands for the same purpose: and so the witches perceiving how the matter stands, will say that the woman is possessed with a divell, and that she can no way be cured, unless she be admitted into their societie. With these words her silly husband being persuaded. (Pory translation, 458–59)⁸¹

Perhaps even more performative than Esperanza de Rojas's love magic, these witches become actresses as they feign demonic heterosexual sex in

order to have same-sex relations. For Weyer, the lesbian witches must become thespians to gain access to the credulous women: "With altered voices, they pretend that the demon is speaking with them" (248). Weyer ends his chapter by expressing sympathy for the real devil, who surprisingly was not a participant in these lesbian affairs pretending to be heterosexual: "But see how the poor devil is wronged in the meantime, in word and in deed, when they put the blame on him for something that he does not do and when they themselves experience the sensual pleasure in which they claim that he is a participant" (249). The witches in Africanus's treatise and in Weyer's manual were able to deceive the women into same-sex relations, despite the fact that it was commonly believed that the devil seduces women by taking the form of a man (known as an incubus), which embodies a heterosexual configuration.

LESBIAN DEVIL WORSHIP IN THE NEW WORLD

The link between lesbian relations and sexualized devotion to the devil continued throughout the early modern period in the Spanish world. Two hundred years after Esperanza de Rojas was punished for heretical activities by the Inquisition in Mallorca, Ana Rodríguez de Castro y Aramburu (according to the records, a fifty-year-old married woman "who does not want to live with her husband" [*Ana Rodríguez*, 114]) was investigated by the Inquisition in Mexico during 1801–1802 for being a fraud and feigning saintliness, false miracles, and divine revelations (21).⁸² The most compelling evidence against Aramburu came from her accomplices and lovers Ana María de la Colina (a forty-three-year-old single woman who had lived with Aramburu) and María de la Encarnación Mora (a twenty-one-year-old single woman who had stayed with the couple for four months in 1801). Encarnación's testimony, in particular, implicated both Aramburu and Colina as predatory women who had introduced her to the corrupt world of same-sex relations and devil worship. Initially believing that sexual relations between women would break the sixth commandment, which prohibits adultery, Encarnación explained how the women first taught her to participate in same-sex activities:

They locked the doors and began to teach me all about the sixth commandment by putting their hands on their bodies, doing what a man would do. Then they kissed me. . . . They had a rash in their private parts and they made me touch them (Aramburu even revealed herself to me) and they told me to use my hand and do to them what they had shown me. Colina did this on three occasions and Aramburu infinite times. (148)⁸³

While the women engaged in sexual relations individually with Encarnación, they also participated in what today would be described as three-somes: "I came to disbelieve the sixth commandment and the three of us would get together, taking turns being the man and the woman, and even using our hands for this purpose" (162).⁸⁴ While the testimony portrayed the sex acts between these women in terms of male and female roles, Aramburu and Colina also reassured the neophyte that "women with women" was not bad—that only sex with a man was a sin (149 and 150).

Reminiscent of Rojas (who used an image of the devil as the altarpiece for her lesbian love magic), Encarnación testified that once she started "sinning" with the devil ("The devil kissed me even in my private parts and I reciprocated, allowing him to sin with me orally" [165]), she also used images of the devil in hell, which she had ripped out of devotional books on prayer and meditation.⁸⁵ However, when Encarnación made rag dolls with which to inflict pain and illness on her enemies (by sticking the representational dolls with pins), her occult powers were not employed to regain an ex-girlfriend (like Rojas had done) but to take revenge on her lovers Aramburu and Colina for having corrupted her and causing her downfall (167). In the end, Aramburu was sentenced to five years in the secret jails of the Inquisition in Mexico City (a term that included a brief period in the hospital for her to recuperate from a venereal disease).

Despite the compelling stories of lesbian desire in the lives of Esperanza de Rojas in Spain and Ana Rodríguez de Castro y Aramburu (with her companions) in Mexico, Inquisitors used their same-sex relations as secondary evidence of the "perversion" that accompanied more serious heretical activities. Even when works on demonology, prostitution, and women's correctional facilities are predominantly focused on heterosexual vice, a close analysis of these narratives reveals the presence of a *marginalized* transgressive sexual history imbedded within a *mainstream* transgressive history. As a result, cases of women participating in same-sex relations and using sorcery to facilitate these lesbian affairs may not be as unexpected as the heterocentric treatises would lead their readers believe. Perhaps it's not by chance that the runaway best-selling work of fiction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain was the story of an ex-prostitute sorceress who uses love magic and is not afraid to perform genital massage to arouse the desire of a young, sensual prostitute in bed. However, unlike Celestina (who worked primarily for her clients), other nonfictional women used love magic to control their own (ex-)girlfriends.

4

Transgender Lesbian Celebrities

There are three very public historical cases that particularly reveal imperial Spain's cultural anxieties regarding gender, sex identification, desire, race, politics, and nation. The first features Elena de Céspedes (named after the mistress of the household), who was born female in the mid-sixteenth century to an African slave named Francisca de Medina and a Castilian peasant named Pero Hernández and permanently marked as the mulatta offspring of a slave through the brand marks on her cheeks. She later adopted a masculine identity during her adolescence (after what she described as a sudden onset of hermaphroditism while giving birth), opting for the name *Eleno* de Céspedes.

The second case involves Catalina de Erauso, who was also known as *la monja alférez* (the Lieutenant Nun). Unlike the socially and racially marginalized Céspedes, Erauso was an educated Basque aristocrat who enjoyed the privilege and entitlement of her class and ethnicity but not her female gender. Upon turning fifteen years of age, she escaped from the convent in San Sebastián where she had lived since the age of four, and used the fabric of her novice's habit to sew an outfit appropriate for a young male. Before leaving port for the New World, she adopted the name Francisco de Loyola. Later, she became known as Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán as well as Antonio de Erauso.

Because of her military conquests in the New World, Erauso emerged as a hero who could be invoked by the crown or the church as an example of imperial Spanish Catholic ideology. So did our third public figure, the gender-bending, sexually deviant Queen Christina of Sweden. By the mid-seventeenth century, Spaniards had received word of Queen Christina's non-traditional gender and sexual preferences. When Spanish ambassadors and church officials became instrumental in the Swedish monarch's conversion to Catholicism, Queen Christina soon became a favorite subject of gossip and

popular theatrical performances in Madrid. Philip IV, who had also been a big fan of the Lieutenant Nun years earlier, seemed unconcerned about rumors of her affairs with other women. He commissioned a portrait of Christina and continued to show great interest in all her activities. If Erauso's service to the Spanish empire, along with her abstinence from heterosexual relations, made her sexual and gender transgression palatable, Christina's rejection of Protestantism mitigated any worries the Spanish aristocracy might have had about promoting a sexual outlaw.

Unlike the criminal lesbians discussed in the previous chapter—women whose female anatomy was uncontested—Erauso, Céspedes, and Queen Christina might be described in today's terms either as transmen, female-to-male transgenders, or gender benders who desire women. Despite their attempts to escape the conflation of gender and sex identity based on genitalia, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they were identified as women-loving women who impersonated men, or at best were described as being more like men than women. However, while these individuals transgressed traditional prescriptions for gender behavior, sex reconstruction, and sexual attraction, the ways in which legal, medical, and religious authorities processed their cases varied significantly, indicating much about early modern conceptions of female homoeroticism, especially when combined with issues of class, race, and ethnicity.

When compared, the cases of these three individuals reveal the politics of entitlement conferred upon upper-class white subjects characterized by their masculinity during the height of Spain's empire-building project. Despite a violent life—including around a dozen murders off the battlefield—Erauso was rewarded for her gender transgression in 1626 with a soldier's pension from the Spanish monarch Philip IV (for years of military service in Peru and Chile) and dispensation from Pope Urban VIII to continue dressing in men's clothing. In 1630 she returned to the New World and lived the last two decades of her life in Mexico, working as a mule-driver (again dressed in male attire and using the name Antonio de Erauso) until her death in 1650. The mulatta Céspedes, on the other hand, was first charged with female sodomy in secular courts, then convicted of sorcery and disrespect for the marriage sacrament by the Inquisitional courts. The latter trial resulted in a sentence of two hundred public lashes and ten years of confined service in a local hospital (dressed in women's clothing). Conversely, Queen Christina (despite or perhaps because of the recurrent representations of her manly nature and rumored affairs with both men and women) was a favorite topic in news stories as well as with the king once she made plans to convert to Catholicism. However, she fell from grace after she sided with Spain's enemy, France, and as a result the representations of her romantic, religious,

and political character shifted and she became an example of sexual perversion. The difference between the divergent outcomes for these three “lesbian outlaws” ultimately points to how same-sex female eroticism, anatomical identity, and interracial desire were configured in early modern Spanish society.

THE LIEUTENANT NUN ON THE EARLY MODERN STAGE AND PAGE

Catalina de Erauso's attraction to other women was represented openly after her transgenderism became public, not only in her autobiography but in a letter published in 1618, a play performed in Madrid in 1626, and two of three news pamphlets (the first two published in 1625 in Madrid and Seville, and the last in 1653 in Mexico).¹

One of the more suggestive adaptations of Erauso's assumed same-sex attraction is found in the play attributed to Juan Pérez de Montalbán, *La monja alférez*. Erauso's popularity during her six years in Spain and Italy before relocating to Mexico undoubtedly inspired Pérez de Montalbán to write a play based on the highly marketable life story of the Lieutenant Nun. The *comedia* was first performed in 1626 in Madrid, precisely at a time when public interest in the story must have been at a peak and perhaps after the audience had had an opportunity to see, hear, or read about the celebrity. Like the “docudrama” and “infotainment” genres popular today, Pérez de Montalbán's play combines historical fact with theatrical fiction in an attempt to entertain his audience with what the playwright considered the most interesting aspects of Erauso's life. Since his public was familiar with the protagonist, Pérez de Montalbán did not have the freedom to abandon the established “facts” or currently held beliefs about the Lieutenant Nun, especially after her recent presence in the city. Therefore, the particular aspects of Erauso's multifaceted identity that Pérez de Montalbán chose to manipulate and exploit may point toward the perceived tastes and preferences of the early modern consumer. As Dorothy M. Kress proposed in 1931, “Perhaps Montalbán wrote the *comedia* only because it was such a popular topic in his day and because he knew better than anyone what the public demanded in order to be entertained” (61).

Despite some critics' attribution of the lesbianism in Pérez de Montalbán's play to an “almost pathological abnormality” and to “abnormal passions” (Parker, 670), the playwright created a noble character who is willing to sacrifice what is most important to her for the future of the woman she loves. Although Erauso's transgenderism is often described as “monstrous,” Mary Elizabeth Perry argues that Pérez de Montalbán's protagonist “is not

portrayed as an unnatural monster representing the mysterious marginal area between both genders" ("La monja," 244). And yet other scholars see the playwright's interpretation of Erauso solely in terms of the masculine character of the protagonist. Although the seventeenth-century actress Luisa de Robles performed the part of Guzmán (Erauso) on stage, some critics see this role as that of a man.² Indeed, Robles performed the role of Guzmán/Catalina dressed in male attire through the entire play.

A review of the characteristics attributed to the Lieutenant Nun in Pérez de Montalbán's play reveals the believed preferences of Erauso as well as dramatic elements that would have pleased the seventeenth-century audience. The popularity of the cross-dressed ex-nun-turned-soldier flirting with other women is not surprising considering the success of the *mujer vestida de hombre* (woman dressed as a man) motif on the Golden Age stage and the erotic nature of exposing women's legs to the male gaze.³ Although Erauso is not forced into a heterosexual resolution, she does not live happily ever after with the woman she loves. While she is not killed off, she will presumably live alone without her beloved, who will receive the heterosexual prize of marriage to Diego.

When the play begins, Catalina has already been transformed into Guzmán and, as a result, we are not privileged to witness the "before" and "after" of her metamorphosis. The viewers must mentally create this duality as they privately share the secret of Guzmán's true identity. Although it was not uncommon for the early modern audience to observe an actress playfully flirting onstage with another woman dressed as a man, the initial scene in Pérez de Montalbán's play differs in that the audience, due to prior knowledge of Erauso's life, had no reason to believe that Guzmán was behaving as a cross-dressed heterosexual woman who would ultimately win her man, or even abandon male garb. In the opening scene, the audience becomes the voyeur of a love relationship between Doña Ana and Guzmán/Erauso. Ana declares, "Could I (being who I am) give you more clear signs of my love?" (act 1, scene 1).⁴ When Ana gives her a chain, Guzmán responds, "I receive this chain because its links demonstrate the prison in which I live due to my love" (1.1).⁵ Even though Ana is unaware of Guzmán's true sex, the latter's expression of love seems just as sincere as her own.

Throughout the play, Guzmán insists on keeping her disguise a secret, preferring death to disclosure: "I will not identify myself even though it may cost me my life" (1.18).⁶ When Catalina/Guzmán's brother Miguel, fueled by suspicion, continues in his obsession to confirm the identity of his sister, Guzmán demands that he keep his distance. Miguel does not stop, but instead confronts her and then pleads, "Come back, Catalina, come back" (1.18).⁷ Guzmán not only denies the truth but takes offense at being called a

woman; as a result, the siblings initiate a knife fight. Guzmán wounds her brother, and the first act ends as she carries him on her shoulders to a nearby hermitage so that he may confess in case the wound is fatal. This climactic end to the first act differs significantly from the sibling rivalry described in the first news pamphlet and in Erauso's autobiography. In these prose narratives, the fight between the two is based on competition over a woman, whereas in Pérez de Montalbán's play the episode focuses on Guzmán's reluctance to reveal her identity. Consequently, the play, unlike the news pamphlet and the autobiography, redirects attention away from Erauso's violent nature and same-sex attraction in favor of gender preference.

When Guzmán attempts to embrace Ana after a long separation, she discovers that her girlfriend suffered an assault to her honor during a night of passion with a man she had thought was Guzmán. Upon discovering that the deceptive lover who had tricked Ana was really Guzmán's friend Diego, the protagonist confronts him, stating that he had completed the act that Guzmán had dreamed of doing: "I am the man from whom you robbed the opportunity, I was the one who was in the street waiting for the bliss that you enjoyed . . . so I only completed the act in thought while you did it in deed" (2.7).⁸ Guzmán declares her love for Ana but is unable to satisfy her desire or Ana's, at least in a traditional heterosexual configuration and without revealing her anatomical identity.

Privately, Guzmán confesses her identity to Diego in order to reassure him of Ana's chastity and thereby facilitate Ana's marriage to Diego, consequently restoring her beloved's honor. Although he had not previously doubted the "heterosexual" love between Guzmán and Ana, Diego now confesses disbelief at the possibility of a woman in love with another woman: "And if you loved Ana, am I to believe that you, a woman, loved another woman? Don't try to convince me of impossibilities" (2.7).⁹ Sara Taddeo's interpretation of Erauso's sexuality in the play is cautious, as she argues that "Catalina's possible lesbianism is neither confirmed nor denied in the play, but the issue is raised by Don Diego" (120). On the other hand, some scholars minimize the potential for lesbian passion in the script: "There were good commercial reasons for writing the play, and there were equally good reasons for leaving out of it any insinuations about homosexual tendencies" (McKendrick, 216). Mary Elizabeth Perry, however, sees a more serious portrait of same-sex desire: "Her love for another woman does not have to be reduced to the absurdity of a non-phallic woman pretending to be a man" (*"La monja,"* 246).

With phallocentric reasoning, Guzmán publicly confesses her true identity in the climactic denouement, largely to confirm that her love interest Ana was never the object of sexual (i.e., penetrative) activity between the two

would-be lovers. Apparently, Guzmán's revelation implies that their passion did not involve a penis and therefore was not an issue for Ana's honor: "Listen, madam, it was your gratitude and your honor that were so dear to my heart that only because I wanted to satisfy Diego's doubts did I confess that I was a woman when it was so secret . . . since saying that I am a woman is the same as admitting that I could not have insulted you or offended you" (3.9).¹⁰

Even though Guzmán admits that she is biologically a woman, this does not mean that she will return to female garb, thereby living as a woman like the protagonists of traditional Golden Age dramas: "Catalina does not return to the status quo (on the most obvious level, wearing skirts) in the finale" (Taddeo, 114). The play's final statement informs the audience of the actual status of Erauso as she continues traveling (in men's garb): "With this and with your permission, this true story comes to an end, and where the play ends so do the actual events, since today the Lieutenant Nun is in Rome, and if more news provides my pen additional material, I promise you a second part. The end" (3.9).¹¹

The references to homoerotic attraction and activity included in the 1625 news pamphlet based on Erauso's story (not to mention her numerous interviews and other news of her life story) undoubtedly inspired the same-sex love story in Pérez de Montalbán's 1626 play. For instance, in the first of two news pamphlets published in 1625, the brief yet evocative references to what the reader would understand as same-sex flirtation (such as the competition between Erauso and her brother over the latter's lover and Erauso's willingness to become engaged to another woman) are suggestive indications of the protagonist's romantic inclinations and the feelings of other women for "her" (see Vallbona, 163–64). Surely the tabloid-style anecdotes from her autobiography were circulating in the cultural conscience. During one episode of her memoirs, for example, Erauso describes how she was fired by her boss when he caught her fondling his sister-in-law: "There were two young ladies in the house, his wife's sisters, and I had become accustomed to frolicking with them and teasing them—one, in particular, who had taken a fancy to me. And one day, when she and I were in the front parlor, I had my head in the folds of her skirt and she was combing my hair while I ran my hand up and down between her legs" (Stepito and Stepito translation, 17).¹² This instance of explicit same-sex erotic interaction is not an isolated case; Erauso frequently expresses a romantic interest in various women in the New World that occasionally results in physical caresses but apparently never leads to the discovery of her anatomical identity. Some critics have speculated that Erauso participated in same-sex flirtation only to be convincing as a heterosexual man (Vallbona, 48 and 71). Eva Mendieta, on the

other hand, has suggested that Erauso's fondling of her boss's relative reflects early modern notions of private *seduction* while her willingness to become engaged with two other women were consistent with public *courtship* practices (185). Of course, once these "private" moments of seduction were recorded to paper (in the news pamphlets and the autobiography), any motivation for same-sex romance became material for public gossip and scrutiny.

Erauso's identity (based on the nature and "condition" of her primary sex characteristics) was determined through an examination in 1617, after she confessed her transgender adventures to the bishop of Guamanga. According to her autobiography, when the bishop was somewhat incredulous of her story, Erauso herself requested a physical exam to prove both her female sex and her status as a virgin:

Señor—I said, it is the truth, and if it will remove your doubts, let other women examine me—I will submit to such a test. . . . Two old women came in and looked me over and satisfied themselves, declaring afterward before the bishop that they had examined me and found me to be a woman, and were ready to swear to it under oath, if necessary—and that what's more they had found me to be an intact virgin. (Stepito and Stepito translation, 65–66)¹³

In contrast to Céspedes's case, the officials in Peru as well as in Spain and Italy were predisposed to believe Erauso's story. The bishop quickly congratulates the transgressive gender-bender: "I esteem you as one of the more remarkable people in this world, and promise to help you in whatever you do" (66).¹⁴ According to her memoirs, as well as the letters, testimonies, and certifications written on her behalf, the examination conducted in Peru was the only verification of her genitalia. Apparently no attempts were made to interview the women with whom she had had romantic encounters. In the end, Erauso's chastity was determined according to a heterobiased criterion of intact virginity, based on the lack of evidence of penetration. Despite Erauso's masculine appearance and aggressive behavior, the primary issue was whether or not she had been the "passive" recipient in sexual relations. The documented narratives record no speculation regarding the possibility of her active role in female sodomy or other genital contact with women (although the between-the-legs fondling of her boss's sister-in-law comes suspiciously close).

Despite the celebrated results of Erauso's physical examination, Pedro de la Valle wrote in a 1626 letter that Erauso had admitted in a private conversation to having used an invasive technique to remove permanently the secondary sex characteristic of breasts: "She has no more breasts than a girl. She told me that she had used some sort of remedy to make them disappear. I

believe it was a poultice given her by an Italian—it hurt a great deal, but the effect was very much to her liking” (Stepto and Stepto translation, xxxiv).¹⁵ There are no accounts of any genital reconstructive techniques or any indication of primary sex disconformity (such as an enlarged clitoris, bisexed status, or hermaphroditism), but by eliminating any external visual trace of her female identity through the breasts, Erauso left no doubt about her serious and enduring preference for living as a man.

ELENA/ELENO DE CÉSPEDES’S DISAPPEARING PENIS

The nature of Elena/Eleno de Céspedes’s anatomy, on the other hand, was much more controversial, not to mention elusive. According to her *discurso de su vida* (autobiographical testimony), she grew a penis while giving birth to a son at age sixteen while she was briefly married to Christóval Lombardo: “When she gave birth . . . a head came out about the size of half a finger (she showed this by indicating on her finger) and which looked like the head of a male member” (quoted in Maganto Pavón).¹⁶ Her husband had left town after she got pregnant, and following suit, Céspedes abandoned her son to the care of another family. In her testimony, Céspedes explained that since the masculine nature of her bisexed condition predominated after childbirth, she decided to act accordingly and start living as a man. However, medical intervention was necessary to facilitate sexual relations with women, as her newly developed penis was impeded from full erection by a layer of skin, which she then had removed surgically. Céspedes eventually married María del Caño after receiving legal and medical confirmation of her male genitalia after multiple examinations by more than ten physicians, doctors, and other officials.¹⁷ In a 1586 deposition, for example, Dr. Francisco Díaz determined Céspedes’s identity to be male and not hermaphrodite: “It is true that he has seen Eleno’s genital member, and having touched all around it with his hands and seen it with his eyes, he made the following declaration: That he has his genital member, which is sufficient and perfect, with its testicles formed like any other man. . . . And he thus said and declared that in his opinion Eleno does not bear any resemblance to a hermaphrodite or anything like it” (translation quoted in Burshatin, “Written,” 433).

Despite this medical confirmation of her exclusively male identity, preliminary sodomy hearings were held in Ocaña in 1587, where Céspedes was charged with having used an instrument during sexual intercourse,¹⁸ and midwives testified that the defendant (like Erauso) possessed only female genitalia and that her virginity had not been compromised: “She stuck the candle up her female sex, and it entered a bit, with difficulty, and this witness was suspicious, so she also introduced her finger, and it entered with

difficulty, and the witness, therefore, does not think that a man has ever been with her" (translation quoted in Burshatin, "Elena," 106). After the charges were changed to bigamy and the trial was transferred to the Inquisition courts in Toledo, Dr. Díaz changed his testimony, now believing that the defendant's male genitalia had been a deception—"an art so subtle that it sufficed to fool him by sight and by touch" (*ibid.*, 433).¹⁹ Yet Céspedes maintained that the loss of her penis was due to injuries she had suffered while riding a horse, combined with a bout with cancer. Furthermore, she insisted that her sexual identity as a hermaphrodite could not be assessed as monosexual or fixed, and therefore she was not guilty of sodomy, lesbianism, desecration of the sacrament of holy matrimony, or demonic intervention:

I never made any pact, explicitly or tacit, with the devil, in order to pose as a man to marry a woman, as is attributed to me. What happens is that many times the world has seen androgynous beings or, in other words, hermaphrodites, who have both sexes. I, too, have been one of these, and at the time I arranged to be married the masculine sex was more prevalent in me; and I was naturally a man and had all that was necessary for a man to marry a woman. And I filed information and eyewitness proof by physicians and surgeons, experts in the art, who looked at me and touched me, and swore under oath that I was a man and could marry a woman, and with this judicial proof I married as a man. (translation quoted in Burshatin, "Written," 447–48)²⁰

An initial review of the cases presented *against* Céspedes and *in support* of Erauso reveals several crucial differences of interpretation that rerouted their same-sex desire toward two separate outcomes. Although Erauso was also believed by some to be a eunuch while living as a man, the physical exam in Peru confirmed both female genital regularity and the intact state of her hymen, in spite of her unspecified sexual adventures with women in the New World. If the investigation of Céspedes's anatomy had relied (like Erauso's) on a single specific testimony, her case could have taken a different turn. However, the multiple and contradictory interpretations appear to have fluctuated between and outside a binary model of sexual identity. In the end, the medical and legal authorities deemed Céspedes's identity univocally female and therefore her desire criminal, given her open sexual relations with other women: "And she remained with the wherewithal to have relations with women, and she returned to Ana de Albánchez and had sex with her many times as a man, and she was with her in her house for about four or five months without her husband noticing anything" (translation quoted in Burshatin, "Interrogating," 13). As a result, the confirmation of both passive and

active genital penetration (with her one-time husband and subsequent female lovers and wife) required punitive legislation of her sexual activity.

When Céspedes was asked if she had had carnal relations with other women “as if she were a man,” she replied:

I’ve had carnal relations with many other women, especially with a sister of the priest I served in Arcos, whose name was Francisca Núñez, and with another married woman from the same place whose name was Catalina Núñez, and with lots of other women from throughout the places I’ve traveled. But, aside from Ana de Albánchez, none of the women I’ve known was aware that I had female organs, since I was always careful to cover them up. At Court, I took as my friend Isabel Ortíz and had relations with her as a man. Isabel never knew I had a woman’s nature. My wife María del Caño never knew I had a woman’s nature. . . . Since I found I had a man’s member and could have relations with women as a man, and since I’d gone around with so many women, I wanted to leave off sin and marry, and not have relations with anyone but my wife. It was because of this that I married. I didn’t think I’d erred, but rather that I’d married in God’s service. (translation quoted in Kagan and Dyer, 48)

Given the inconsistencies in Céspedes’s testimony, her insistence that the women with whom she had sexual relations had no knowledge of her hermaphroditic condition could be interpreted as an attempt to protect her lovers from criminal prosecution (Kagan and Dyer, 48n30). Conversely, Céspedes’s open confession of multiple female lovers could be seen as proof of her seductive personality and her intuition for identifying women with “similar tendencies” (Maganto Pavón, 53), thus implying Céspedes’s early modern “gaydar” as well as the ready availability of lesbian lovers.

Ironically, Céspedes cites her active sex life with multiple female partners as her motivation to marry María del Caño, reforming her sinful life in doing so. Of course, despite the numerous examinations that had confirmed her male genitalia, at the time of the Inquisitional investigation there was no physical evidence of the functioning penis: “At present I have only my woman’s nature. The male member that emerged from me has just recently come off in jail, while I was a prisoner in Ocaña. It only now finished falling off” (translation quoted in Kagan and Dyer, 49). As Lisa Vollendorf rightly observes, “The attention given to the penis during this trial cannot fail to impress anybody who reads the documents” (*Lives*, 23). In fact, as part of Céspedes’s testimony, she or he drew a line on paper as an indication of the length of his or her penis before it fell off (see Kagan and Dyer, 47).

However, given her extensive medical library (of her twenty-seven books, twenty-four were medical texts), surely Céspedes was aware of anatomical descriptions of the hypertrophied clitoris believed to be capable of penetrating a woman (Maganto Pavón, 90). Nonetheless, even the doctors and surgeon who examined her denied that Céspedes had this condition: "She was not a hermaphrodite but a woman. . . . Although it is true that what is called the nymph or pudendum can grow large on some women, for whom it is developed in the womb, this woman does not have such a nymph, nor does she have any indication of ever having it" (quoted in Maganto Pavón, 41).²¹ Céspedes does claim, however, that her ambiguous condition had been manifest at birth as a "closed private part, such that one could not tell which sex organ she had, only a small hole through which she would urinate" (quoted in Maganto Pavón, 19).²² It is not by chance that Céspedes describes her condition in these terms, as the specific language would have resonated with the medical community and was used successfully in the subsequent case of the manly nun María Muñoz, who had suddenly transformed into a man while performing rigorous labor in the convent: "She had been a 'closed up' woman and didn't have much more than the tiny hole. . . . We deduced that the small hole was the location where the male instrument was able to urinate but the entire organ had been stuck inside."²³ While Céspedes reportedly tried to hide her monthly periods by claiming that the blood stains were caused by hemorrhoids,²⁴ Muñoz was trying to deceive the other nuns by pretending to have a period that was nonexistent: "She would stain her undergarments with the blood from her mortifications, telling the others that she had her period." Accordingly, secondary sex characteristics were used as confirmation of the female identity of the beardless Céspedes, whose breasts were described as large and having "the nipples of a woman,"²⁵ and the male identity of Muñoz, whose chest was "flat as a board" and whose facial hair and voice became manly once "the male member had emerged."

At this point, we might question the role that race and ethnicity played in assessing desire between women during this period. The differences between both Erauso's and Céspedes's interracial homoeroticism are striking. While Erauso embodies the white upper-class imperial subject who evaluates various mestiza women in Chile, Peru, and Mexico as potential lovers, Céspedes is portrayed as the mulatta lesbian predator: an invader of gender, sexual conformity, and national and racial expectations. Israel Burshatin argues that Eleno's claim to be a hermaphrodite disrupts more than just sexuality and corporeal morphology: it also stands for nation and race ("Elena," 110).

It is not by chance, then, that Erauso's entertaining yet nonthreatening lesbian escapades were far from Spain and with New World mestizas, while Céspedes was "preying" on women too close to home. In fact, Erauso's

account of how she took advantage of and then abandoned two women in Chile actually invites the early modern reader to excuse her behavior when she describes the women in the New World as opportunistic: "And it seems that, since Spaniards were scarce in those parts, she began to fancy me as a husband for her daughter" (Stepito and Stepito translation, 28).²⁶ In chapter 7 of Erauso's autobiography, two concurrent episodes involve efforts to arrange marriages with the Basque nobleman. On more than one occasion, the protagonist willingly accepts the gifts offered by her fiancées and then escapes, leaving the women "*burladas*" (deceived): "And a couple of days later, she let me know it would be fine by her if I married her daughter—a girl as black and ugly as the devil himself, quite the opposite of my taste, which has always run to pretty faces" (28).²⁷ Although Erauso has no intention of marrying the girl, perhaps in part due to the potential risk of being discovered, she clearly reveals her racist colonial ideology through her preference for lighter-skinned women.²⁸ Erauso's extreme repulsion based on race is further emphasized in the subtle variation in one of the eighteenth-century manuscript copies of her autobiography deposited in the Archivo Capitular in Seville: "My wife was black and ugly, quite the opposite of my taste, which has always been for pretty faces, which is why one can imagine that the four months that I was with this woman, for me, were like four centuries" (quoted in Rubio Merino, 68).²⁹

While Marjorie Garber downplays the role of desire in this episode ("The resistance to marriage is more strongly marked by aversions of class, race, and nobility than by gender or sexuality" [xv]), the intersection of race and desire here creates a significant contrast to other ambiguous representations of "*la monja alférez*." Instead of eroticizing the exotic Other (as is frequent in early modern representations of Moorish women in Spain, for example), Erauso enacts a sexual demonization of the *mestiza* ("black and ugly as the devil himself"). This racist representation of the unappealing *mestiza* might be analyzed effectively through the postcolonial filter of what Anne McClintock terms "porno-tropics," or the portrayal of New World women as imperial boundary markers (25). Dramatizing the colonialist's responses of desire and repulsion, Erauso presents the women of Chile and Peru as sexual objects available for her consumption, even if only temporary and for economic gain.³⁰

At the same time, however, just as Erauso demonized the potential object of her affection, her desire for the "pretty faces" of other women is indirectly criminalized in the text through her mistreatment of the women in the New World. Even when Erauso seems positively inclined toward a potential wife—"I met the girl, and she seemed good enough" (29)—after collecting the valuables, she abandons the girl (Vallbona, 70). Despite many critics'

assertion that the protagonist's behavior reflects her desire to be convincing as a man, in the news pamphlets and in the autobiography Erauso's same-sex desire is frequently associated with aggression or criminality. However, what neutralizes this negative image in the minds of the early modern readers is the fact that the objects of Erauso's disdain were considered inferior both socially and racially to the upper-class European suitor. For Marjorie Garber, the tensions between Indians and Spaniards, between purebreds and half-breeds, and between the merchant class and the nobility helped produce a sympathetic audience for Erauso's story (xvi).

Other critics have warned against comparing Erauso's racist comments about the *mestiza* to her own marginalization as a transvestite spectacle: "To align Catalina, as a cross-dressing 'other,' with the victims of colonialism is to miss the truth that the rewards of her transformation were gained almost wholly at their expense" (Stepito and Stepito translation, xli). In this way, Erauso undoubtedly contributed to the assault on the personal and cultural integrity of *mestiza* women, which was based on sexual, racial, and class relations.³¹ Consequently, Erauso's "romantic" episodes with the women of Peru and Chile are just as much about violence and power as they are about desire and fantasy.³²

In Erauso's autobiography, the focalization is limited to the narrator-protagonist, so we are not able to see the point of view of the *mestiza*. Yet in the conclusion to chapter 7, the author's comments hint at the possibility of consequences for having abandoned her fiancées: "And I have never heard exactly what became of the black girl or the little vicarress" (29).³³ One might assume, then, that the women deceived by Erauso's false promises of marriage would have their own stories of rage and exploitation. In Erauso's life narrative (as well as in the testimonies written on her behalf), there is an untold story—the perspective of the women who were not only the objects of the protagonist's desire but also desiring subjects who found themselves attracted to the beardless Basque soldier. It is in the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality where the early modern audience is forced to reconcile the inherent conflicts between the orthodox repulsion of the New World *mestiza* and the deviant (yet celebrated) lesbian imperialist. Ultimately, the dilemma is short-lived, as Erauso's service to the Spanish empire redeems her sexual and gender transgression. Likewise, the combination of the critique of same-sex desire with proof of her abstinence from heterosexual intercourse allows the containment of a Lieutenant Nun epidemic and permits the emergence of a hero who can be invoked by the crown or the church as an example of imperial Catholic ideology.

Despite their efforts to live permanently as men (using male names), both Céspedes and Erauso were identified as female and, given the accounts

of their sexual desire for other women, linked to an early modern conception of lesbian erotics. While medical, legal, royal, and religious authorities undoubtedly considered race, class, and empire when they examined specific sexual and gender transgressions, the same system that rewarded the noble “virgin” war hero but condemned the mulatta bigamist created popular lesbian celebrities out of both.³⁴ After their private experiences were made public, crowds of curious fans and critics rushed to get a glimpse of the famous transgendered icons. The Lieutenant Nun’s first public appearance was sponsored by the ecclesiastic authorities in Peru, where “His Eminence left the palace with me at his side, and we made our way slowly through a crowd so huge, it was hard to believe there was anyone left at home” (Stepito and Stepito translation, 66).³⁵ In contrast, Céspedes was publicly punished in two localities, Toledo and Ciempozuelos (the town where she had married María): “Her case is given a higher profile by the Inquisitors themselves, when they also make her appear in an *auto da fé*, held in Toledo . . . and [she] is forced to parade around the central square wearing the requisite mitre and robes [*sambenito*], with insignias ‘appropriate’ to her crime of bigamy” (translation quoted in Burshatin, “Elena,” 118). Shortly after Céspedes began her obligatory service in Toledo, the hospital administrator complained of the inconvenience of her celebrity status: “The presence of Elena de Céspedes has caused great annoyance and embarrassment from the beginning, since many people come to see and be healed by her” (*ibid.*, 118). As Israel Burshatin summarizes, “A reputed hermaphrodite, a woman who has lived, loved and married as a man, has become a surgeon, and has even been suspected of possessing magical healing powers, this *mulata* is now a local *cause célèbre*. Of Eleno’s many bodies, none is as powerful as this latest incarnation” (“Elena,” 118).

Erauso (as the Lieutenant Nun) likewise becomes a marketable draw for the masses as well as the elite, in the New World: “News of this event had spread far and wide, and it was a source of amazement to the people who had known me before, and to those who had only heard of my exploits in the Indies. . . . There were more people waiting than we knew what to do with, all come out of curiosity, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Lieutenant Nun” (67–68).³⁶ Later, in Spain, Erauso’s experiences included “lying low as much as possible and fleeing from the swarms of people that turned up everywhere, trying to get a glimpse of me in men’s clothing” (73).³⁷ Meanwhile, in Rome, “My fame had spread abroad, and it was remarkable to see the throng that followed me about—famous people, princes, bishops, cardinals” (79).³⁸ Both historical characters became carnivalesque attractions, but one was compensated and free to continue living as a man, while the other was publicly punished and then confined, forced to repay a perceived debt to society.

Interestingly, their notoriety continued years after the initial scandals filled the public squares and news pamphlets. Céspedes is written into Jerónimo de Huerta's 1599 annotated translation of Pliny's *Natural History* as a transgendered criminal lesbian of color—"that Andalusian slave, named Elena de Céspedes, who having abandoned female dress, for many years pretended to be a man [and] gave indications of being one, though badly sculpted, and without a beard and with some deceitful artifice; and it was so natural in style that after being examined by several surgeons and declared a man, she was married in Cien Poçuelos" (translation quoted in Burshatin, "Elena," 119).³⁹ Céspedes herself had cited Pliny years earlier to document the prevailing medical belief in sexual transmutations. Huerta, however, uses her case to show how deceptive reconstructive surgery can create an appearance of genital regularity.

Decades later, Fray Antonio de Fuentelapeña uses Céspedes's case in his 1676 *El ente dilucidado: Tratado de monstruos y fantasmas* (The Elucidated Being: Treatise on Monsters and Phantoms) as the example most often cited when doubting the possibility of natural sex changes. Like Huerta, Fuentelapeña mentions Céspedes as a clear case of sex change as hoax:

I know that some and even many have doubted such metamorphoses and transmutations, believing them to be impossible. They believe that the cases of women who changed or converted into men are fabricated inventions or deceptions designed by the women themselves. To prove this, they use the case that occurred in Castile of an Andalusian slave named Elena de Céspedes, who stopped wearing women's clothing, pretending to be a man for many years. She passed as a man, though without a beard and not well designed, with an artificial trick that looked so real that some surgeons who examined her declared that she was a man. She was married in a town in Conde de Chinchon called Cienpozuelos. Eventually the Holy Office of the Inquisition discovered the truth and revealed the deception. (244–45)⁴⁰

Fuentelapeña concludes his summary of Céspedes's case by noting that because of this case, people say that similar frauds could have occurred in other cases of sex changes.

Erauso's life story was also invoked in a popular tract three years after her death. A broadside published in Mexico in 1653 provides a telling interpretation of how the Lieutenant Nun had developed as an icon in her later years and even after her death. While the broadside continues the sensationalized adventures where the 1625 news pamphlets had left off, it is the only story to focus on the lesbian identity of the protagonist.

The main story of the 1653 broadside centers on a tale of frustrated same-sex desire. With the king's and pope's blessings, Erauso is now living and working in Mexico as Antonio de Erauso. Yet she no longer needs to worry about discovery, since those familiar with her history already know the official version of the "truth" beneath the masculine attire. When Erauso is asked to accompany a young woman on a trip, the former finds herself attracted to the latter, "traveling with her, enamored by her beauty" (quoted in Vallbona, 172).⁴¹ However, when a gentleman also falls in love with the woman, Erauso is overcome with jealousy and tries to convince the woman to enter a convent with her. When the woman rejects the offer and decides to marry the man instead, Erauso cannot contain her envy and becomes physically ill. She eventually recovers her health, deciding that she would rather be jealous than die of separation from her beloved (173). Accordingly, she starts to visit her love interest but becomes so jealous of the other female friends who also visit the young woman that the husband decides to prohibit Erauso from going to the house. Not surprisingly, Erauso becomes irate and challenges the husband to a duel, and when the latter refuses, saying that he will not fight a woman, she erupts: "Our traveler exploded volcanoes from her eyes" (174).⁴² She later confronts the husband but eventually controls her anger and turns her back on her competitor, while those who witness the scene are impressed by her fearlessness: "The bravery of her retreat was well-known and was much celebrated by those who knew her" (174).⁴³

Despite (or perhaps because of) the open lesbian characterization of the protagonist, the news pamphlet ends with a hagiographic description of Erauso's saintly life and death: "She died an exemplary death. . . . She had the habit of praying every day, for all the professed nuns; she fasted every Easter, Advent, and on vigils; every week on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays she did three flagellations; and she went to mass every day" (174–75).⁴⁴ Erauso's transgressive desire, then, was neutralized by her military service and the official confirmation that she had not compromised her female chastity while living among men. In Erauso's case, the cross-dressing and lesbian flirtation were believed to facilitate her abstinence from heterosexual and phallus-centered models for sexual activity, whereas Céspedes's scandal highlighted her efforts to usurp the male sexual role through marriage and penetrative sexual relations.

SPAIN'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH QUEER CHRISTINA OF SWEDEN

In Queen Christina's conversion from Lutheranism to Catholicism, Spain appeared to be a central player. One of the first important participants in her

conversion was Bernardino de Rebolledo, Spain's ambassador to Denmark. Rebolledo was in contact with Christina and initially informed Philip IV of her interest in the Catholic faith. After learning of her intentions to convert, the king of Spain wrote a letter in 1649 declaring that Spanish ports were open to Swedish ships. Spanish envoy Don Antonio Pimentel then arrived in Stockholm in 1652 and continued the intricate negotiations that would have a decisive impact on European economic, religious, and social politics. However, rumors soon spread throughout Europe that Pimentel was also Christina's lover, despite the open secret of the queen's relationship with her lady-in-waiting Ebba Sparre.⁴⁵

The salacious stories of Christina's bisexual affairs notwithstanding, the news reports that circulated in Spain in the mid-seventeenth century centered on her manly nature, her rejection of marriage, the preparations for her abdication and conversion to Catholicism, and her extensive studies and travels, which were to include a much-anticipated visit to Spain. Proof of Spain's interest in this nontraditional monarch can be seen in Jerónimo de Barrionuevo's inclusion of more than fifty news items about Queen Christina in his *Avisos* (Notices) between 1654 and 1661. Barrionuevo's first characterization of Christina appears in September 1654, when he describes her riding a horse dressed in men's clothing and Philip IV showing his admiration of the queen by sending her thirty beautiful horses. Barrionuevo adds that she rides "as if she was a man, and therefore the king sent her these horses. Furthermore, they say that she is more than just a woman, not that she is a hermaphrodite but that she is not the marrying type" (58).⁴⁶ As Barrionuevo insists on how manly the queen was, describing her in terms of what she is *not*—a typical woman, intersexed, or "the marrying type"—we see the coded language that was frequently associated with masculine superiority (but not the "monstrous" category of hermaphrodite). Paradoxically, Barrionuevo hints at a possible virtuous asexuality typically linked to chastity while at the same time insinuating same-sex inclinations.

In 1611, Sebastián de Covarrubias wrote, "We say *marimacho* (mannish woman) for the woman who has the mannerisms of a man" (790). When Don Antonio Pimentel was the Spanish envoy to Sweden from 1652 to 1654, his nephew Juan Pimentel de Prado wrote the following description of the Swedish monarch, corroborating Barrionuevo's characterization of Christina as *marimacho*:

Nothing about her is female except her sex. Her voice seems masculine, as do her mannerisms. She rides horses every day . . . in such a way that if you didn't see her up close you'd think she were an accomplished man. . . .

Our lord the king has requested her portrait painted on horseback. . . . When she is in the palace she dresses very casually and I have never seen her with any gold or silver ornaments on her head or neck, perhaps just a ring on one finger. She is not much for wearing makeup and only once a week does she fix her hair and sometimes every two weeks. On Sundays she only spends half an hour to get ready and on other days barely fifteen minutes. (quoted in Vega, 61)⁴⁷

As Rose Marie San Juan explains in her analysis of the various portraits of Queen Christina, the Swedish monarch sought to promote herself through these portraits. Barrionuevo confirms in his January 12, 1656 news item that “in all the cities she has visited, she requests that a famous painter take her likeness. She has sent her portrait to the king, in which she is dressed in soldier’s garb from the waist up, dashing look, attractive face, lively almond-shaped eyes, and so serious, which says it all. She knows martial arts as well as the most skillful general” (237).⁴⁸ In 1653, Philip IV had requested an equestrian portrait of Christina to be painted by Sebastian Bourdon. Popular among seventeenth-century monarchs but rarely used for women, equestrian portraiture symbolized masculine imperial power, which undoubtedly seemed most appropriate given the characterizations of Queen Christina as a manly ruler (San Juan, 25).

Despite Christina’s disinterest in marriage, some believe that she was briefly considered a viable candidate for marriage to Philip IV in the mid-1640s when he found himself a widower after his first wife died (Quilliet, 137). In fact, Barrionuevo returns to the idea that Christina could produce a male heir for the Spanish empire in his commentary on October 27, 1655: “The queen of Sweden has written an elegant letter to the king. . . . All we need now is for him to fancy her to give him a son, since he is good at making bastards but not so good at producing legitimate heirs” (211).⁴⁹ Less than a year later, on April 8, 1656, Barrionuevo reiterates the gossip about the king’s inability to father a son, and then endorses the suggestion of an archduke as a possible partner for Christina in order to produce a successor to the throne:

They say that the Hapsburg royal family has decided that, in case God does not grant a male heir to inherit the throne, the emperor (brother of our queen) can marry the princess and the archduke should do the same and marry the queen of Sweden, and then they can make sure that they appoint him king of the Romans so he could rule the empire. I can’t confirm it. Even if it isn’t true, it is a good idea, since the emperor is paralytic. (263)⁵⁰

Despite these attempts to link Queen Christina to the future of the Spanish empire, specifics about her reported love life (with rumors of affairs with men such as Pimentel and women such as Ebba Sparre) were suspiciously absent from public news items and gossip in Spain.⁵¹ Undoubtedly, the tales of her illicit activities were not consistent with the success story of Spain's ability to facilitate the triumphant conversion of a major political figure in Europe, and securing a major ally against France in doing so. As the Spanish monarch and the general public prepared for the long-awaited arrival of Queen Christina to Spain, repeated announcements of the planned festivities for the foreign celebrity seemed to build nervous anticipation. Barrionuevo even comes across as giddy when writing about the Swedish monarch. In January 1656, he writes, "They say that in the month of May she will come to Spain. . . . She is a prodigy in every sense" (239).⁵² Then, in February, "It is true that she is coming to Spain in May and that she will stay with the Discalced Nuns during the time that she is here and then she will go to the Alhambra in Granada, which she wants to see very much" (239).⁵³ In March, there are two separate news items: "For the arrival of the queen of Sweden, which they say will be this spring . . . they are preparing great festivities in Madrid to entertain her. . . . As for my part, I have celebrated her with a poem, but each person can offer what they can since sometimes the flower is just as valued as the diamond" (253).⁵⁴ Barrionuevo then includes his *décima*, which concludes with Queen Christina representing the triumph of Catholicism over heresy: "A greater triumph has never been seen; / She came, she entered, she conquered, she triumphed" (*ibid.*).⁵⁵

By May of the same year, news coverage of the queen shifted dramatically. With such high expectations for Christina, it must have been devastating when Spain received word of her surprising alliance with its enemy, France. Suddenly Christina ceased to be praised for her manly erudition and advanced equestrian skill, and was instead condemned for her perverse mistreatment of men. Interestingly, the new focus on Christina's romantic activities excludes details of her relations with other women. On May 6, 1656, Barrionuevo writes:

They produced a vile lampoon of the queen of Sweden, describing her as a hypocrite, superficial, crazy, and dishonest with Antonio Pimentel, her love interest, among others. They say that a cardinal gave her expensive jewelry, hoping she would wear it in his name, telling her that it couldn't look more beautiful on any prettier woman. He said that she responded that she wasn't as smitten as one ought to be. They also say that the king has commanded all the Spaniards who are accompanying her to leave at once. . . . Antonio Pimentel and the other Spaniards who accompany the

queen of Sweden have already left for Flanders per the king's orders. (277)⁵⁶

In an entry dated July 1656, we read more details of the dramatic separation between Christina and Pimentel:

They say that when Antonio Pimentel said goodbye to the queen of Sweden to return to Flanders, she was irritated with him for having told her to pay more attention to her modesty, and she said the following words: "You are a vile coward, a thief, and a despicable and evil gentleman, and if you weren't a vassal of the king of Spain, whom I esteem so much, I would show you exactly what you deserve. Don't you dare show your face here or test my anger again." With these words she turned her back and walked away without waiting for a response. (295–96)⁵⁷

By September 1656, reports of Christina as a deviant heterosexual include mention of an illicit pregnancy resulting from an affair with an ecclesiastic, which according to the same reports, prompted the queen to procure a secret abortion before arriving in France: "They say that she is four months pregnant by Cardinal Lomelin, a dashing young man with an attractive demeanor and appearance. . . . They say that one night before arriving in Paris, the queen of Sweden secretly had an abortion. She is a woman. Anything is possible" (Barrionuevo, 314).⁵⁸ Christina is no longer the superior masculine hero but a transgressor in perverse heterosexual relations, as Barrionuevo now emphasizes her inferior status as a woman: "She is a woman. Anything is possible." A few months later, Barrionuevo again links her womanly vice to her alliance with France: "They say that the queen of Sweden is quite taken with the French. She wants to see everything. She is a woman; it doesn't surprise me" (8).⁵⁹

Given the unexpected split between Spain and Queen Christina, it is not surprising that Philip IV prohibited the performance of Calderón's 1656 auto sacramental (written to celebrate her conversion to Catholicism), which Barrionuevo reports on June 7, 1656 (284).⁶⁰ Since the auto sacramental *La protesta de la fe* had been written before the falling-out between Christina and the Spanish court (and two years before Calderón wrote the *comedia* titled *Afectos de odio y amor*), the protagonist of the religious play is not "characterized by the reprehensible trait of arrogant pride," as is Cristerna de Suevia in the palace *comedia* (Thomas, 151). Calderón's Cristerna in *Afectos de odio y amor* is represented as a typical *mujer esquiva*, a stock character whom Melveena McKendrick has famously described as "the woman who, for some reason, is averse to the ideas of love and marriage" and who is

“usually, but not invariably, averse to men as well” (142). Accordingly, having just inherited her kingdom, Calderón’s Cristerna emerges in act 1 as a defender of women’s right to rule: she abolishes Salic law, outlaws duels, and forbids women to marry for love outside their social class, assigning the death penalty to those who transgress the law. Eventually Cristerna finds herself attracted to a man who turns out to be her antagonist Casimiro, but the “happily ever after” coupling occurs only after the playwright hints suggestively at the historical Christina’s lesbian affairs. The audience is first alerted to the implied reference with the playwright’s choice of the name “Lesbia” for Cristerna’s lady-in-waiting. The lesbian subtext comes to the surface in the final scene of act 3, when Auristela, Casimiro’s sister, turns him in as the assassin responsible for the king’s death and thereby earns her the right to marry Cristerna, as promised. Once the two women agree to the same-sex union, Auristela is then able to hand over her newly acquired betrothed to her brother Casimiro so he can marry Cristerna in her place:

Auristela: Well if your hand in marriage is already mine, why are you waiting to confirm it?

Cristerna: And I give you my hand.

Auristela: And I accept it.

Turín (*aside*): Well, *who ever saw a play end with two women getting married?* [emphasis mine]

Auristela: And given that your hand is mine, and nobody can deny it;

Casimiro: take this hand.

Cristerna: How dare you!

Auristela: Yes, just as a jewel that I own, I can wear it or I can give it to whomever I choose. Come here. What are you waiting for?

Casimiro: I’m not sure if I dare.

Auristela: What are you afraid of?

Casimiro: I’m fearful of touching her.

Cristerna: There is no need to be fearful, since it is not about who does the giving but who receives you. And since my pride has surrendered to conformity, Lesbia, erase the edicts from the legal code. May the world return to the way it was, and may women know that they are born the vassals of men. And in their affections, when love and hate compete, love always wins.

Turín (*aside*): I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again, women are the devil himself.⁶¹

At the end, we witness the transformation of Cristerna from the “militant feminist” who had rejected marriage and given women the right to rule over

men into a complacent woman willing to submit herself to a man's control as his vassal, thereby cancelling her previous edicts in favor of women's rights. In accepting Casimiro as her husband, Cristerna concedes that the traditional status quo is preferred. Indeed, it is not by chance that the *comedia* titled *Afectos de odio y amor* was written after the falling-out between Spain and Queen Christina. As Mary Lorene Thomas suggests:

In both of Calderón's plays, the female protagonists have been converted, in the *comedia*, to the natural law, and therefore to God, and in the auto sacramental to the Roman Catholic faith. Each protagonist has had qualifications and attributes built into her character—"esquivez" (disdain), arrogance, and vanity in the *comedia*, strength and constancy in the auto—but since each attribute was called for by the plot, few generalizations about Calderón's feminism can be based solely on these two protagonists. But yet, since both plays are works of popular literature, performed before a heterogeneous Spanish audience, they might be seen as purveyors of popular opinion, and we must acknowledge the call for the conversion of the female protagonist from imperfection to perfection, from independent woman to perfect wife, from heresy to Roman Catholicism, from leader to vassal. (154)

Undoubtedly both of Calderón's plays inspired by the life of Queen Christina serve to "correct" the perceived shortcomings of the protagonist. However, I would argue that his *comedia* goes beyond correcting what was seen as Cristerna's personality flaws (such as vanity, pride, and *esquivez*). Given the play's embedded references to same-sex desire and what the audience knows about the "real" Queen Christina, Calderón's *comedia* also serves to correct her errant sexuality from lesbian tendencies to orthodox, marriage-accepting heterosexuality. In this way, it is significant that only after Christina falls from favor are her resistance to heterosexual marriage and her implied same-sex desires exposed, vilified, and in need of rectification. As Spain had witnessed a few decades earlier in the case of the Lieutenant Nun, it is possible to celebrate a lesbian heroine, but only when the manly woman's class, race, religion, and politics represent the dominant ideology of the Spanish empire. Of course, regardless of ethnicity or alleged chastity, the tolerance of same-sex desire is only temporary, and in the end the early modern lesbian is not allowed to "get the girl" and live with her happily ever after, either on the news page or on the theatrical stage.

5

Special Friendships in the Convent

Awareness of lesbian practices in religious communities dates back to at least the fifth century, when Saint Augustine—suspecting or imagining the possibility of same-sex liaisons in convent communities—warned nuns and novices that “the love between you . . . ought not to be earthly but spiritual, for the things which shameless women do even to other women in low jokes and games are to be avoided” (Parsons translation, 50).¹ This preoccupation on the part of the church fathers and ecclesiastical leaders with the possibility of same-sex desire among nuns and novices, referenced only indirectly in Saint Augustine’s text, becomes much more explicit in the official rules for convent life in the seventh-century *Regula ad Virginea* (*The Rule of Donatus of Besançon*), in which Donatus of Besançon decrees

that none take the hand of another or call one another “little girl.” It is forbidden lest any take the hand of another for delight or stand or walk around or sit together. She who does so, will be improved with twelve blows. And any who is called “little girl” or who call one another “little girl,” forty blows if they so transgress. . . . Each should sleep in a separate bed. . . . They should not have the younger sisters with them in the bed but be joined by elders or groups. (McNamara and Halborg translation, 21 and 40)²

In other medieval penitentials, such as the late seventh-century *Penitential of Theodore*, the sin between women is included in the section on “fornication” and receives the same penance as masturbation: “If a woman practices vice with a woman, she shall do penance for three years. If she practices solitary vice, she shall do penance for the same period” (translation quoted in

McNeill and Gamer, 185). Referred to as “special” or “particular” friendships, these prohibited relationships were identified through specific behaviors such as hand-holding, using terms of endearment, and dangerous nocturnal proximity. These prohibitions were modified and repeated through the centuries, especially those in the rules and regulations for each religious order.

The *regla* (convent rules) govern a religious order and originate from the medieval saint who put them into practice. The Dominican Order, for example, follows the Rule of Saint Augustine from 1216, and the Discalced Carmelites follow that established by Saint Albert Avogadro in 1210 (see Torres Sánchez, 97). The constitutions have the same structure and content as the rules while covering various aspects of convent life in more detail (schedule, clothing, official jobs, the tasks of the nuns, instructions on how to accept nuns in the cloister and how to educate them). The constitutions typically conclude with a section on crimes and punishments for those who fail to adhere to the rules and regulations.

Whether the convent floor plan adopts a communal dormitory or individual cells (or both, in some convents, to accommodate class divisions), the rules and constitutions of the convent outline specific instructions for sleeping arrangements, which attest to concern over nocturnal communications and relations. As Jacqueline Murray observes, warnings about dormitory configurations have been reiterated for centuries in convent rules and constitutions in order to discourage sin, “although over time the underlying rationale became less clear” (“Twice,” 214n25). The constitutions following the Rule of Saint Francis (published in 1642), for example, imply this concern, specifying that all nuns are to sleep in a common dormitory and that each nun is to sleep dressed and covered in her own individual bed. The abbess is also to have her bed in this communal area, and is to be situated in a position to oversee all the beds of her nuns. To facilitate this surveillance, there is to be a lamp lit during the night in the dormitory (*Constitutiones generales*, 21v). Other rules and constitutions indicate that each nun should have her own individual cell, which in some convents are to be separated by curtains instead of doors: “The cells that are the bedrooms should not have doors but humble curtains in front so that the nuns can dress and undress and rest in bed with more decency and modesty” (*Regla y constituciones del convento*, 16).³ While this version of the Carmelite rule recommends the curtains as a structure to ensure modesty, one might question whether doors would not serve the same purpose. Perhaps the curtains also allow for auditory vigilance, whereas closed doors might provide errant nuns more privacy.

Accordingly, most constitutions prohibit nuns from visiting each other’s cells, especially without special permission from the prioress. This rule is

frequently included in the section describing the importance of silence in a religious community:

Each nun must remain in her own cell without hindering the service of virtue, or breaking the silence by having two or more nuns in one cell. . . . No nun may enter the cell of another without permission from the prioress. Those who do enter another's cell should complete a mortification and fasting, and if it occurs at night, they should receive the punishment of a grave sin, which is the same punishment for those who enter the cell of another during the day without permission, and they deserve the same those who enter the cell of the prioress at any time if she is not present. (*Regla y constituciones de las religiosas carmelitas*, 71 and 105r-v)⁴

Also, "any nun who enters the cell of another deserves the punishment of eating off the floor in the refectory, and if there are two nuns to one cell, they should behave themselves without making noise" (*Constituciones generales*, 68v).⁵ The crime for entering another's cell without permission is listed under the category of *culpa grave* (grave error) and the punishment commonly is "a mortification during the chapter meeting and eating bread and water on the floor" (*Constituciones propias*, 69).⁶

What is typically implied in the constitutions (in references to silence and sleeping arrangements) is occasionally explicit in the section on crimes and punishments. The rule and constitutions of the nuns of the Sacred Order of Our Lady of Mercy (1624) includes the sin of sodomy between nuns in the section on "most grave errors": "It is also a serious crime if a nun falls into a sin of the flesh, and if (God forbid) a nun were convicted of the sin of sodomy, she should be permanently incarcerated or be expelled from the convent" (*Regla y constituciones de las religiosas y monjas*, 18v).⁷

PARTICULAR FRIENDSHIPS IN THE CONSTITUTIONS

While most constitutions refrain from mentioning "sodomy" directly, they are explicit about the importance of avoiding the *amistades particulares* that can develop between nuns. The specific mention of these relationships is frequently included in chapters describing the need for peace and love among the nuns, as articulated in the 1630 rule and constitutions of the Convent of the Calced Carmelites: "And so we strongly encourage peace and love among all our nuns. . . . *Particular friendships* are not permitted, but rather everyone should love each other equally, and if there is some specific affection it should

be stopped immediately. This should be followed strictly to avoid destroying the peace and harmony of the convent" (*Regla y constituciones del convento*, 21; emphasis mine).⁸

While peace and goodwill are the result of abstaining from individual affections, these dangerous relations are also described in terms of specific physical behavior. When Saint Teresa of Avila drafted new constitutions as part of her efforts to reform the Carmelite Order, her explicit commentary discouraging physical displays of affection is included in the section "On the Sick."⁹ Although the particular friendships are sketched with broad strokes, they are associated with the physical intimacies of touching, hugging, and playing, as well as with the visits and conversations mentioned previously: "No sister must embrace another, or touch her face or hands, and there must be no *special friendships* among them but each must have a general love for all the rest, as Christ often commanded his Apostles. This will be easy for them to do as they are so few in number. . . . This habit of loving the whole community, and not merely individuals, is of great importance" (Peers translation, "Constitutions," 227; emphasis mine).¹⁰

While most rules clearly prohibit private affections, Teresa allows certain controlled communication among the nuns, recognizing its role in creating solidarity. However, she also specifies under the section on serious infractions that "a grave fault is committed if any nun carries on immodest conversation with any other" or "if at the hour of rest, or at any other time, any nun enters another's cell without leave or without evident necessity" (233–34).¹¹

Undoubtedly, the role of the mother superior is crucial to the control of specific relationships in the convent. In the chapter titled "On the Election of the Abbess and her Duties" in the constitutions of the Order of Saint Claire, we read that "individual affections should be avoided because loving one nun more than the others gives rise to scandal in the community" (25v) and that "the abbess should be careful to preserve the peace by discouraging *special friendships*, but rather all sisters should love each other equally in Our Lord. This should come first and not exclusively with one person" (43v; emphasis mine).¹² The prioress is also responsible for discouraging these relationships, lest an attached nun attempt to defend a special friend who is being disciplined for any reason: "Individual friendships are not permitted. . . . And for this reason we charge the prioress not to allow any nun to defend another on any account. . . . In Christ we advise our nuns to obey this with special caution and those who desire their spiritual improvement will find it through loving everyone the same and by avoiding special friendships, and not defending one another. In this way, they will enjoy internal and external peace" (*Regla y constituciones del convento*, 21r–v).¹³

The abbess must refrain from getting closer to one nun than to the others, as favoritism would cause scandal in the community: "And she should protect her community by her own modest life because her nuns are encouraged by her example and will obey her more out of love for her than by fear of her. She should not have any individual affections so that loving one won't give rise to a scandal among all" (*Constituciones generales*, 32v).¹⁴

The importance of avoiding favoritism as a result of individual attachments between the prioress and nuns in the religious community is likewise highlighted in Teresa's treatise on how convent visitations by male clergy should be conducted. In *Modo de visitar los conventos* ("Visitation of Convents"; drafted in 1576 and published in 1613), Teresa instructs the visiting prelate to ensure that there are no special friendships between the prioress and her nuns:

The visitor must find out if the prioress is making a *special friend* of any nun and doing more for her than for the rest: it is only this last consideration—the *excessiveness of the friendship*—that makes attention to this point necessary, for prioresses are always obliged to have more to do with the nuns who are more discreet and intelligent. And, as our nature prevents us from recognizing ourselves as what we really are, each of us thinks herself important, and thus the devil may be able to tempt some of the nuns in this way. For when no serious occasions of sin present themselves to us from without, he works us up about trifles concerning our community life, so that we may always be at war and our resistance may gain us merit. So the nuns may very well think that the prioress is ruled by this sister or by that. If any such friendship be excessive, the visitor must contrive to check it, for it is a great temptation to the weak; but it should not be completely ended, because, as I say, the people concerned may be such as to make these friendships necessary, though it is always well to lay great stress upon the inadvisability of special friendships of any kind. (Peers translation, 690; emphases mine)¹⁵

Although the visiting ecclesiastic must be on guard for favoritism between the prioress and her daughters as well as among the nuns themselves, he must also consider the reputation of the convent, avoiding a potential scandal by not overreacting to behaviors that can easily be resolved *intramuros* (in-house). Teresa prescribes discretion in such cases:

It is something to be admired when the childish doings [*niñerías*] of the nuns, if there be any, are kept secret. Now, glory to God, little harm is done because the visitor looks upon things as would a father and thus

keeps them secret. . . . Someone who does not stand in God's place will perhaps think that what amounts to nothing is a great matter . . . and the reputation of the monastery is lost for no reason. (translation quoted in Weber, "Spiritual," 135)

Perhaps it is in these recommendations for discretion and secrecy to avoid scandal and loss of reputation that we can see how coded some of the language is in much convent writing when discussing intimacy between nuns. Certainly it was this concern for discretion, containment, and tempered recreation that inspired some sections of the satirical "*Constituciones del Cerro*" penned by Jerónimo Gracián (with Saint Teresa). Chapter 8, article 4 instructs that "if one is tempted with another, announce it during recreation so that everyone understands the temptations and becomes scandalized and that the entire community is in an upheaval" (498) and chapter 2, article 3 advises, "Since our followers [i.e., melancholic nuns and friars] are always struggling against sensual temptations, if perchance involuntarily [*sin culpa*] their flesh gets the better of them, let them become so distressed that they give up on prayer and contemplation" (translation quoted in Weber, "Spiritual," 140).¹⁶ Alison Weber concludes, "Once again, the intended message is the antithesis: overreaction to infatuation and involuntary sexual arousal does more harm to a community than the sensual temptations themselves. We can also infer that the prioress was expected to play a crucial mediating role should the atmosphere become erotically charged, preventing nuns from becoming too attached to their confessors" ("Spiritual," 143).

Concern over the fact that these rules might lead impressionable and lonely nuns to imagine scenarios they might otherwise not have thought about undoubtedly impacted the degree of detail included in these discussions. As Weber reminds us, the nuns "spent approximately twelve of the eighteen hours that constituted the Carmelite day in solitary activities—in prayer, devotional readings, and manual labor—and came together for meals, for the chapter of faults, and to recite the divine office" ("Spiritual," 132).¹⁷ Surely vigilant ecclesiastics and prioresses were careful not to underestimate how the solitude of convent life could contribute to the ideas lonely nuns might glean from their readings on special friendships.

Not surprisingly, the favoritism that could develop from special friendships can also apply to relationships between men and women. In the section titled "Chastity" in the 1642 constitutions of the Order of San Francisco, for example, nuns are prohibited from forming particular friendships or having personal exchanges with clergy, monks, or secular men (*Constituciones generales*, 79v).¹⁸ Teresa also warns against these heterosexual

relations between male clergy and female nuns in her “Visitation of Convents”:

A visitor must not be more intimate with one nun than with the rest, nor be alone with her, nor write to her, but must show equal affection to all the nuns, like a true father. For as soon as he becomes especially friendly with a nun in any convent, even though his friendship be like that of Saint Jerome for Saint Paula, he will no more be able to avoid being slandered than they were. And harm will be done, not only in that particular house but in all the houses, for the devil will at once see that the scandal gets about, for his own advantage. (Peers translation, 252)¹⁹

Even when the relationship is innocent, these individual attachments can inspire gossip and promote opportunity for temptation. Despite their concern about unwarranted rumors, what Teresa and others either had witnessed or feared as the potential for abuse between confessor and penitent nun was graphically related in the Inquisition trial against Fray Juan Ibáñez, who was sexually aroused by the idea of two nuns fondling each other. In 1819, Sor Agustina del Corazón de Jesús testified that the deviant priest had told her to touch herself in front of him and then suggested she engage in same-sex relations with another nun as a replacement for the heterosexual physical contact that he desired but was unable to achieve:

Finally, frequently, when I had my period, he made me open the confessional door in order to see my face. . . . I was disgusted by it but I had to obey to appease him. Other times in the confessional during confession, after asking me how I was and learning of my indisposition, he would say to me, *Clean yourself, you must be very wet. Put your hand on your private parts, stretch it flat, and then insert your finger inside.* This honestly stunned me—astounded me—and I reprimanded him, telling him to be silent, but he insisted, saying, *Well, what a harsh girl! Do what I say, since I can't do it for you. If only I were inside. . . . If only your friend (he named her) were here! Then she could touch you and you could touch her. Believe me, since I have no other pleasure. You should know that I think about you all the time.* (AHN: Inquisición 563, n.p.)²⁰

Far from the nonconsensual and pornographic nature of the abuse of power in Sor Agustina's situation with Fray Juan, Jodi Bilinkoff describes a different and more common type of relationship between confessors and penitent nuns: the mutual affection expressed in terms of “love at first sight” and “soul mates” (*Related*, chapter 4). As we will see in the relationships be-

tween Teresa of Avila and her close companions, the intimacy they share is frequently articulated in similar terms.

THE RHETORIC OF SAME-SEX DESIRE IN SAINT
TERESA'S CAMINO DE PERFECCIÓN

Few scholars would question the adamant warnings against *amistades particulares* in Saint Teresa's work. In *The Way of Perfection*, for example, Teresa describes at some length the excessive affection and attachments that can develop in the convent, characterizing them as *ponzoña* (poison) and *pestilencia* (pestilence). As noted earlier, the author reiterates her admonishments against such intimate relationships in her "Constitutions," as well as in "Visitation of Convents." Given that mutual love and respect was imperative for the successful operation of any religious community, it seems that Teresa was bound to discuss the possible overindulgence of interest, fondness, and partiality associated with *amistades particulares*—what have been described by scholars as anything from individual friendships to explicit lesbian affairs. As a witness to the complex relations in a same-sex community, Teresa directly outlines the harmful consequences of these partnerships for convent life. In chapter 4 of *The Way of Perfection*, the author reveals specific details about these special friendships:

This [too much love for each other] is even more applicable to women than to men and the harm which it does to community life is very serious. One result of it is that all the nuns do not love each other equally: some injury done to a friend is resented; a nun desires to have something to give to her friend or tries to make time for talking to her, and often her object in doing this is to tell her how fond she is of her, and other irrelevant things. (Peers translation, 54)²¹

Teresa notes how, when a nun is involved in such a relationship, she shows her preference for her special friend over others and feels resentful when her partner is insulted or injured. Teresa's conclusion in this passage is twofold. First, that these passionate feelings leave little room for God, and on a practical administrative level, they allow the devil to create factions within the community: "These intimate friendships are seldom calculated to make for the love of God; I am more inclined to believe that the devil initiates them so as to create factions within religious Orders" (54).²² The political aim behind the anxiety over possible preferences and favoritism is noted by Weber in her chapter on *The Way of Perfection*, in which she describes the work in terms of its rhetoric of irony as well as for solidarity in the convent:

"During these early days of the reform Teresa was greatly concerned with avoiding factionalism within the convent. She saw danger in intense individual friendships, reflected in terms of endearment" (Teresa, 84).

While Teresa's goal in discussing individual friendships may be the successful operation of a spiritual community, the result on the page provides the reader with details of the possibilities for how these relationships might be manifested. One point repeated in multiple writings by the nun involves romantic interest and physical attraction. In chapter 4 of *The Way of Perfection*, after addressing the *particularidades* that make us prefer one person over another, the text distinguishes between interior virtue and the external appearance that inspires such *amistades grandes*: "Let us love the virtues and inward goodness, and let us always apply ourselves and take care to avoid attaching importance to externals (55).²³ Later, in chapter 7, Teresa continues the contrast between positive love among all nuns and negative attachments between individual couples: "This will be a much truer kind of friendship than one which uses every possible loving expression (such as are not used, and must not be used, in this house): 'My life!' 'My love!' 'My darling!' and suchlike things, one or another of which people are always saying" (78–79).²⁴ No doubt that this kind of language both inspired and defined the level of intimacy in convent relationships. Avoiding these loving expressions was seen as a step toward discouraging individual fondness for one another and perhaps repressing the desire of the speaker.

Like the admonishment against verbal displays of affection (and the warnings against physical demonstrations of partiality mentioned in Teresa's "Constitutions"), other manuals for convent behavior repeat the prohibition and extend it to include other gestures that can lead to physical attachments. Published in 1662, the *Ceremonial de las religiosas carmelitas descalzas* (Ceremonial of the Discalced Carmelite Nuns) describes how nuns should talk, walk, direct their gaze, and gesture, in addition to avoiding the types of jokes and touching that display too much familiarity: "When looking, don't look by staring with too much penetration or fondness, and when laughing, do so without opening your mouth audaciously. When speaking, do so without distorting your lips or other similar actions, which are far from good restraint and mortification" (110).²⁵ The nuns are likewise prohibited from touching each other while talking, engaging in games and other play with their hands, touching another's face, holding hands, and being too animated while speaking.

And yet despite extensive warnings against "special friendships," there is an implied *normalizing* function of these detailed descriptions of same-sex affection in Teresa's work. In other words, while Teresa deplored *amistades particulares*, she also characterizes these relationships and attraction as the

normal development of close friendships if left unchecked or unmonitored. In chapter 4, for example, Teresa assures her readers that preferences are part of human nature, and that they must exercise restraint and not let their affection conquer them: "Believe me, sister, . . . if our will becomes inclined more to one person than to another (this cannot be helped, because it is natural—it often leads us to love the person who has the most faults if she is the most richly endowed by nature), we must exercise a firm restraint on ourselves and not allow ourselves to be conquered by our affection" (Peers translation, 55).²⁶

The idea that same-sex attraction could be considered a natural part of our makeup is reiterated in "Visitation of Convents," when Teresa stresses the importance of monitoring favoritism by the prioress, "for prioresses are always obliged to have more to do with the nuns who are more discreet and intelligent. And, as our nature prevents us from recognizing ourselves as what we really are, each of us thinks herself important, and thus the devil may be able to tempt some of the nuns in this way" (244).²⁷ In chapter 4 of *The Way of Perfection*, Teresa again gives practical advice on how to avoid these partialities:

In checking these preferences we must be strictly on the alert from the moment that such a friendship begins and we must proceed diligently and lovingly rather than severely. One effective precaution against this is that the sisters should not be together except at the prescribed hours, and that they should follow our present custom in not talking with one another, or being alone together, as is laid down in the Rule: each one should be alone in her cell. (56)²⁸

Apart from the logical recommendation of solitude to avoid special attachments between nuns, the implication in this passage is that any friendship has the potential to develop into something more intimate.

Just as Teresa suggests that some aspects of intimacy between nuns are to be expected, her writings also expose the ambiguities inherent in determining when affection among the sisters is too much or not enough. As Teresa exclaims in chapter 4 of *The Way of Perfection*, "Love for each other—this is of very great importance . . . we never manage to keep it perfectly. It may seem that for us to have too much love for each other cannot be wrong, but I do not think anyone who had not been an eyewitness of it would believe how much evil and how many imperfections can result from this" (54).²⁹ Since it is imperative that all nuns love one another, the potential for misunderstandings is unavoidable, but Teresa also offers advice in chapter 7 of *The Way of Perfection* for the compassionate nun who, as she imitates the

love of Christ, finds her friend misinterpreting her generosity: "The recipients of this friendship, then, profit greatly, but their friends should realize that either this intercourse—I mean, this exclusive friendship—must come to an end or that they must prevail upon our Lord that their friend may walk in the same way as themselves. . . . Either, then, she will amend or their friendship will cease" (74–75).³⁰

In fact, the difficulties in understanding the subtleties of love and friendship in the convent are exposed when comparing the different drafts of *The Way of Perfection*. For example, in the Valladolid manuscript, chapter 7 ends with a dramatic attack against *amistades particulares*:

Drive away this plague; cut off the branches as well as you can; and, if that is not sufficient, pull up the roots. If you cannot do this, shut up anyone who is guilty of such things and forbid her to leave her cell; far better this than that all the nuns should catch so incurable a plague. Oh, what a great evil is this! God deliver us from a convent into which it enters: I would rather our convent caught fire and we were all burned alive. As this is so important I think I shall say a little more about it elsewhere, so I will not write at greater length here. (80–81)³¹

In the earlier Escorial manuscript, on the other hand, chapter 7 continues and ends with a notably different message: "Provided they treat each other equally, I would rather that the nuns showed a tender and affectionate love and regard for each other, even though there is less perfection in this than in the love I have described, than that there were a single note of discord to be heard among them" (81).³² By indicating in the earlier draft that the lesser of two evils is the affectionate love between nuns (despite being inferior to a perfect spiritual love), Teresa had previously concluded that this attachment might be preferable to feelings of ill will and conflict. Perhaps this sentiment was edited out because of its potential to undermine her argument against such intimacy between nuns.

Just as the politics of visibility regarding nontraditional desire is debated today, it seems that there was a lack of consensus about how much, if at all, these relationships should be exposed. Even though Teresa doesn't silence this issue in her texts, she advises her readers to avoid the topic: "There is no need for us ever to take such things upon our lips, sisters, or even think of them, or to remember that they exist anywhere in the world; you must never listen to anyone speaking of such affections, either in jest or in earnest, nor allow them to be mentioned or discussed in your presence. No good can come from our doing this and it might do us harm even to hear them mentioned" (73; emphasis mine).³³ And yet, despite warning against pon-

dering the issue, Teresa was well aware that the nuns were savvy about such relations: "It may be, sisters, that you think it irrelevant for me to treat of this, and you may say that you already know everything that I have said" (68–69).³⁴ In fact, even if Teresa's readers had not witnessed such affection between nuns directly or even heard rumors about such transgressive desire, they could surely read about same-sex attraction in other religious as well as secular texts.

For example, Bernardino de Villegas's 1635 treatise *La esposa de Christo instruida con la vida de Santa Lutgarda, virgin monja de San Bernardo* (The Bride of Christ Instructed by the Life of Saint Lutgarda, Virgin Nun of Saint Bernard) develops an extended and detailed description of romantic relationships in the convent. Citing Saint Bonaventure's seven-point commentary regarding *amistades particulares* in *Proceso religioso* (Religious Process), Villegas presents the material as a kind of self-test to determine whether a convent friendship is really spiritual or carnal. Although he primarily borrows from the twelfth-century theologian, Villegas's treatise also reflects and expands on some of the passing comments that Teresa includes in her works.

Just as Teresa saw the potential of spiritual friendships developing into a more physical intimacy, Villegas explains how these relationships are created as well as their consequences: "The love that at first started as spiritual and with a superior purpose, at the end is twisted and becomes vain, impertinent, and carnal." He imagines the hellish torture of having to live under the same roof with others when conflict arises: "And the worst hell is having spent their entire lives together and enclosed in the four walls, without being able to separate from each other for a moment, forming exclusionary groups, divisions, and enemies with the other nuns. But if there is unity and good will . . . the convent will be a paradise and its residents angels, among whom there are no disputes, arguments, or dissension at all" (227).³⁵

Villegas then borrows from the extensive section in Bonaventure's twelfth-century treatise that railed against individual friendships and their destructive repercussions:

There are paths (as the Holy Spirit says) that seem good to man but that end up leading to death. Such is the path of special friendships, which described as friendship, love, and mutuality seem like a safe and sound path to Heaven but sometimes it isn't and they lead to hell and the final destination: eternal damnation. As Saint Jerome seriously contemplated, the love that begins as spiritual and for superior motives can become twisted and end up as foolish and useless carnal love. If the bride of Christ wants to see if her affection is carnal or spiritual, she only need to

stand in front of the mirror of the angelic doctor Saint Bonaventure (in chapter 16 of his *Religious Process*) and there she shall see the qualities of love clearly. The saint describes seven indications of carnal love, whereby one may discover many other dangers of these special friendships, which are the poison of true charity. I will merely reproduce the chapter of the angelic doctor, which is pure gold. (232–33)³⁶

Chapter 5 (“Seven Inconveniences That the Holy Doctor Saint Bonaventure Observed in the Particular Friendships between Some Nuns”) outlines seven target areas to examine. In the description of each category, the author explains the specific characteristics of carnal love between nuns and the features of its opposite, spiritual love:

1. *Topics of conversation*: “The first indication is the conversations between the two. If it is spiritual love, then they always deal with God and saintly topics. However, if they are carnal, then they will never deal with this because everything is joking, entertaining, everything is a little story, humor, jokes and talking about how much they love each other and who loves whom more. For vain conversations like these, the day is short and the night passes in an instant. Another problem is that this vice robs us of our precious time. The spouses of Christ ought to avoid these friendships if for no other reason than this. . . . A nun leaves the secular world to live with God. If she was pursued by suitors, friends, and family in her previous home, now when she is a discreet virgin who refrains from these issues and topics, she still isn’t safe since within her own house (if she isn’t careful) there is still an enemy who tempts her with her own flesh.”³⁷
2. *Affection, motivations, and actions*: “The second indication of carnal love is the affection with which they look at each other: they always want to be together, going around attached to each other, without knowing how to be apart, losing the respect and seriousness expected of a spouse of Christ through their shameful actions. Conversely, spiritual love is serious, grave, and circumspect. It does nothing in secret that can’t be done without embarrassment in public.”³⁸
3. *Mental stress, worry, anxiety, and distraction*: “The third indication and danger of these particular friendships are the worried thoughts and troubled heart when one doesn’t know what the loved one is doing—where they are, with whom they are talking, what is troubling them, if they are sick, if they need anything. She can’t pray freely or give herself peacefully to divine contemplation since her heart is so distracted. Physically she might be in choir praying, but mentally her

soul is in the cell of her friend and she can't wait for the prayer time to end so she can go see her. Spiritual love is quiet, peaceful, and never more at rest as when you love and pray to God for the person you love, in peace and silence."³⁹

4. *Jealousy, conflict, and exclusivity*: "The fourth indication of carnal love and other damage from these relationships is the anxiety about whether someone is going to steal the person she loves, as when she sees her girlfriend looking at another woman; envy if someone else gives her something; jealousy if she is not by her side; and these cause arguments and discord in the community. Because carnal love is possessive of the one she loves, and is so discourteous and disadvantageous that she gets offended when another gets in between the two. Spiritual love, in contrast, is happy to see that others love her [the girlfriend] too, and never more content than when others discover her goodness."⁴⁰
5. *Potential for anger when the couple fights*: "The fifth indication of disorderly love is the anger and upset that sometimes exists between nuns who love each other; . . . if there is the least cause for offense between the two, they exceed the limits of rash feelings, and end up hating each other with the same passion with which they had loved each other. Then complaints arise against one another, one throwing in the other's face the favors she has done, revealing secrets and misdeeds. Spiritual love is patient and kind, as Saint Paul says. It feels the other's pain, but does not cause it, and with a gentle spirit it gives helpful advice to one for her own good."⁴¹
6. *The gifts and loving expressions one desires to give her special friend*: "The sixth indication and warning are the little favors and impertinent gifts that result from vain little love interests; because spiritual love is not pleased by these childish pleasures and baby talk. As Saint Jerome says, fervent prayer, edifying words, and assistance when needed are the oil with which the love of God is cultivated and sustains us."⁴²
7. *The desire to cover up for or defend one's partner from criticism*: "The seventh indication and last warning against these particular friendships is the uncontrollable lying that one nun does to cover the misdeeds of the other, each ignoring the other's faults that are offensive to the community. And when the vigilant prioress reprimands one, the other comes to her defense, trying to diminish the gravity of her offense, even when she can't deny it, because it's so obvious to everyone else. In contrast, spiritual love has piercing vision, for seeing the defects of the person she loves. And if she really loves her, she wants to improve, correct, and help her. We see this with God, who

punishes more harshly now the defects of those close to him in preparation for the next life. This section is from Saint Bonaventure, almost word for word." (232)⁴³

Villegas concludes his treatise by noting that "these are the indications and dangers of particular friendships, which are the pestilence of religious communities, as the saints confirm. . . . All particular friendships are of grave danger to the community, but even more so when they involve prioresses. For when one is more attached to her friend or a relative than to the others, this offends greatly the goodwill of the community" (234).⁴⁴

Villegas's treatment of "inappropriate" same-sex friendships in the convent differs from other documents of the era in its persistent focus not on punishable sex acts but on the emotional intricacies of an intimate relationship—the day-to-day nuts and bolts of a partnership rather than the isolated sexual encounter that may occur within or outside a more lasting personal relationship. In this way, while the author attempts to outline what the nuns should avoid, he pulls back the curtain on a closed community to expose part of the scenario of intimacy in an all-female space. By not focusing exclusively on specific sexual activities, we see a more nuanced picture of real relationships. Moreover, we can assume that to do otherwise would have brought unwanted criticism of the spiritual state of the convent. As Sinistrari laments, the silence on carnal specifics may also be due to the fact that many confessors were ignorant of (or embarrassed by) the sexual possibilities among women. On the other hand, some scholars argue that the lack of specific sexual details in treatises such as Villegas's work indicates a lack of concern about lesbian relations on the part of moralists. Mariló Vigil, for example, concludes that "it is difficult for me to believe that they [sexual relations between nuns] didn't exist. It seems more logical to think that they weren't given much importance" (250).⁴⁵

As moralists continued to write about damaging "special friendships" in the convents in Spain, they typically did not include the extensive detail that Villegas had offered his readers. Antonio Arbiol's 1716 manual for nuns, *La religiosa instruida* (The Instruction of Nuns), also includes a separate chapter about special friendships. Modifying Villegas's chapter title ("Seven Inconveniences That the Holy Doctor Saint Bonaventure Observed in the Particular Friendships between Some Nuns"), Arbiol's chapter 9 of book 4 ("Grave Inconveniences That Come from the Special Friendships That Some Nuns Have with Other Nuns in Their Convents") begins by citing Teresa as the authority on harmful intimate relationships between nuns, and later cites Bonaventure's description of these friendships as "abominable" (453 and 455). While Arbiol argues that these unholy alliances cause discord, divisions, and preferences that

affect the entire community, he only hints at the emotional attachments or what Villegas referred to as “carnal love”: “From the moment the novice steps foot in the convent, she ought to take particular care to protect her heart with saintly independence, not allowing an imperfect attachment to anyone” (454).⁴⁶ Asunción Lavrin observes that as Arbiol explained the nature of imperfect and reprehensible friendships between nuns, “he addressed the political aspect of such friendships, not their sexual nature” (*Brides*, 239).

Despite his reiteration of previous warnings against special friendships in the convent, what Arbiol does contribute to the debate is his description of how common it is for nuns to find these intimate friends or partners in a monastic community. Citing scripture’s comments on “natural coupling” or “like meets like,” Arbiol (like Teresa) undemonizes these special attachments in the convent by describing them as part of human nature: “Since human beings and mortal creatures identify more with some people than with others in their communities, and the sacred scripture says that each one looks for his or her like, and this likeness of nature induces a special love, we will provide some rules so that these special affections do not become harmful in the community” (455). After denouncing the relationships that are not “true friendships,” Arbiol then offers suggestions for how a close relationship can be used to help another nun on her spiritual path. The author seems to acknowledge that since human nature leads people to feel closer to some individuals than to others, this closeness can actually facilitate religiosity: an attached nun can use her friendship to help the other become more devoted to God; she can help the other nun correct her defects (out of perfect charity); she can help bring her to prayer, and so forth (456).

Práctica de confesores de monjas (Manual for Confessors of Nuns; published in Madrid in 1708), an insistently didactic treatise written by the Mexican cleric Andrés de Borda, also addresses same-sex relationships among nuns by using a dialogic structure between a confessor and a penitent nun as his format. In what Stephanie Kirk describes as “ostensibly a manual for confessors, although it is apparent that the nuns themselves are his intended audience” (65), Borda’s confessor assures the nun that *amistades particulares* are doubly sinful since they violate both the vow of chastity and the prohibition of sexual relations with religious women:

Father, how do you feel about these special friendships between nuns in the convent, as well as those between nuns and people outside the convent, which are commonly referred to as “devotions”?

Señora, I feel that any love that exceeds the limits of modesty, whether between two nuns or a nun and a layperson—if one has made a vow of chastity, there are two mortal sins: one committed against the

virtue of the religious vow, so that any nun who has a relationship with anyone inside or outside the convent, if it becomes indecent, enters into a state of unforgivable damnation. And any confessor who absolves her is gravely ignorant because if such a relationship is going on inside the convent, they [the nuns] have greater proximity and occasion to sin than if it is outside; either way it cannot be absolved. (44v)⁴⁷

While it is clear that these illicit relations could occur between two nuns, or between a nun and a layperson outside the convent (male or female), *in-tramuro* relations were perhaps more dangerous due to the close proximity of the potential partner.

THE EARLY FOLLOWERS OF SAINT TERESA ON SAME-SEX INTIMACY

The various followers of Saint Teresa who continued the reform of the Discalced Carmelites included María de San José, Ana de San Bartolomé, Ana de Jesús, and Ana de San Agustín. As Elizabeth Teresa Howe observes, these writers knew Teresa and sought to imitate her in their lives and in their literary works ("Heeding," 45). Considering the importance that Teresa gives to promoting spiritual love among her sisters (and the need to avoid the consequences of *amistades particulares*), it is not surprising that this topic surfaces either directly or indirectly in the written work of her early disciples.

María de San José (1548–1603)

In *Consejos que da una priora a otra que ella había criado (1590–1592)* (Advice from One Prioress to Another Whom She Had Trained), María de San José cites Teresa's "Constitutions" as she addresses the issue of intimate relationships and the role of the prioress in ensuring the unity of her community:

Don't take lightly what our saintly Mother Teresa wrote in the constitutions: "May the prioress seek the love of her nuns so they might obey her." Therefore I say that this warning should come first: the hearts of your nuns are won with love in order to keep them united so that you can govern them with more peace and progress. In this way, the yoke and burden of the many duties in such an austere life will be less distressing for the nuns. And may they consider her as friend the one who stands in the place of Christ so that the door might close for those who would seek *individual friendships*, which greatly destroy the true unity and charity that is won and achieved with the incentive of the common good. (*Escritos*, 239; emphasis mine)⁴⁸

Later, in 1602, María wrote about how novices should be educated as well as what kind of temperament is needed for novices taking their final vows. In her *Instrucción de novicias* (Instruction of Novices), the character Irene displays the “melancholic” temperament and condition that Teresa had written about and which was frequently associated with excessive desires and uncontrolled emotions. As Concepción Torres suggests, under the right conditions the melancholic temperament could lead to inappropriate relationships in the convent (46). María describes how the prioress should deal with this personality type, and ultimately suggests that melancholic novices should not be allowed to take final vows. First, the correction of such women is unlikely, short of a miracle. Furthermore, they present a serious risk to the religious community, as they set a dangerous example for other nuns in the convent:

There is little to say about Irene and those nuns of her nature, although there is much to understand for those in charge of them. They tend to be melancholic, which is an emotion that with impulse seeks to fulfill its appetite and shies away from reason like a runaway horse that needs to be reined in. I believe this says it all. . . . Our saintly Mother, in one of her “Maxims” that she wrote to teach prioresses how to deal with such nuns, and after giving specific rules, concludes that it is necessary that they not lose fear, with which prioresses can govern more effectively. . . . So, if, during the trial year, they discover the kind of disposition that Irene has, out of good conscience they cannot admit her to the religious profession, because without a miracle of God there is no hope that she can change: and it is not right to ask for such a miracle nor is it right to burden the religious community with such a big and dangerous risk, especially since it is easier to copy vice than virtue and we find more imitators of bad examples than of good ones. (*Escritos*, 429–31)⁴⁹

At the end of *Instrucción de novicias*, María includes a section titled “Modo de enseñar a las novicias” (Method of Teaching Novices), which describes the subjects that the novices should be taught during the first three months. Instruction includes doctrine as well as physical composure, such as in one’s speech, walk, and gaze. Furthermore, the nuns should seek a sincere and true heart and avoid extreme demonstrations of favoritism. After six months, the novices learn mental prayer and exercises of virtue, taking great care to read and interpret the rule and constitutions. In fact, María also warns against dangerous relationships in her poetry. In a poem written around 1589, “Retrato de la verdadera Carmelita” (Portrait of the True Carmelite Nun), María writes about how “any love that leans toward damaging friendships / is a plague and hell for nuns” (524).⁵⁰

Ana de San Bartolomé (1549–1626)

The close relationship between Ana de San Bartolomé and Saint Teresa is well documented in their life writings (autobiographies, biographies, written correspondence) and iconographic images (paintings and engravings). While this intimate partnership is consistently characterized in terms of its service to God, the nature of their close friendship could surely raise suspicions about its partiality and potential favoritism. In his edition of Ana de San Bartolomé's *Obras completas* (Complete Works), Julián Urkiza notes how the union between the two and their close circle of friends created a certain lack of freedom, which Ana only regained after the death of the saint:

When she met Teresa and became her inseparable companion, their friendship and feelings spread in a special way to those persons who most loved Mother Teresa. It was Teresa who had called attention to the inappropriateness of attaching one's affection to specific people so that one can maintain freedom from loving without attachments. And Ana herself confessed that she was unsuccessful at this, since her fondness for Teresa and her friends was strong and natural. Only through Saint Teresa's death did she receive the grace of emotional freedom from the Saint: *She achieved it for me because since then I've been free and released, and it seems like I have more love for others whom I love without trappings of self love. As for the rest, it's as if I was alone in this world and I love all the nuns in God and for God.* (355)⁵¹

In Crisóstomo Enriquez's 1632 biography of Ana de San Bartolomé, *Historia de la vida, virtudes . . .* (*History of the life, virtues . . .*), the author uses the nun's intimate companionship with Saint Teresa as a way of establishing Ana's spiritual legitimacy, as Teresa's orthodoxy had been recently confirmed through her 1622 canonization. Described in terms of what could be compared to "love at first sight," the two nuns were inseparable:

Saint Teresa had hardly seen or talked to her when she chose her as her personal companion. And although she didn't take her along to found convents, whenever she was at the convent in Avila she had her in her cell, and she spoke with her more in particular than with the other nuns, as I have stated elsewhere, and as she writes in the relation or story of her life, where she writes, referring to the saint: *Since I took the habit she brought me to her cell and for the rest of her life I was with her . . .* all the rest of their life together with the unbreakable bond of love, so much so that you wouldn't see one without the other. (306)⁵²

The author quotes Ana, who confirms the union and physical proximity between the two, despite convent prohibitions against two nuns spending time alone in one another's cells: *Since I took the habit she brought me to her cell and for the rest of her life I was with her.* For a couple who appears to be joined at the hip, their inevitable separation becomes a tragic end to a great love story:

Who can imagine the close friendship, the great love that existed their entire lives between these saintly brides of Christ, and how united and attached their hearts were to each other. Since they couldn't be convinced to separate from each other, there is no doubt that one could expect big feelings and many tears from such a painful farewell . . . and not even after death did she want to separate from her. She resolved to remain in Alba to keep the saintly body company. (393 and 400)⁵³

Ana de San Bartolomé also maintained intimate friendships with other nuns, in particular Ana de la Ascensión and Leonor de San Bernardo. As Urkiza notes, Ana de Ascensión's jealous and insecure personality inspired the profusion of affirmations confirming Ana de San Bartolomé's continued love for her: "The holy woman tried to take these fears and jealousy from her by showing her a distinct affection and with a constant affirmation of love and friendship she tried to calm the heart of the English prioress" (71).⁵⁴ A few examples from the letters written by Ana to her English friend demonstrate their mutual affection—and they also invite questions about how some nuns were able to circumvent the prohibitions of partiality among sisters:

I love you and cherish you and I am not attached to anyone. My Lord knows this well and no one will get in the way of the love that I have for you. (February 1617)

Well, I can assure you that I love you above all others and no nun could give me the pleasure and satisfaction that I have with my dearest daughter. (February 1617)

I don't know why you ask me if I'm angry. Certainly not, my dear daughter, I am not and have no reason to be other than at my own sins and misfortune. I love you greatly always and I only wish that your soul is captive to no other than God. (June 1617)

And believe me, my dear daughter, that when I write you so bluntly, as you put it so well, it is not for lack of love, which is as dear to my heart as could be. Haven't you heard the expression, "He who loves you the most will make you cry because he speaks to you without pretense." (August 1617)

I love you with a pure heart without reserve, so much that all the nuns tell me that I love you more than them. They say it out of love for you since they see that I love you like an eldest daughter." (November–December 1619)⁵⁵

Ana's open expression of affection is also evident in her letters to Leonor de San Bernardo (1577–1639): "I feel you have forgotten me and if you loved me as much as I love you, you would write more often. I say this so you see how much I love you in Our Lord and that you are the one who is most in my thoughts and the one to whom I am most indebted" (November 1624).⁵⁶ With such direct admissions of intimacy preserved in material documents (which could be circulated and interpreted to serve multiple purposes), one wonders how these loving sentiments could be considered commonplace in a climate of convent vigilance.

In their assessment of Ana's letters to Leonor, Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau suggest that Teresa's correspondence provided a model for epistolary intimacy:

Her ability to create and nurture relationships through correspondence imitated that ability in her Founding Mother. To Leonor de San Bernardo, for instance, she demonstrates a degree of attachment rarely seen in nuns' letters: "I don't know how to explain your silence, . . . since I love you with all my heart and hold you in esteem. . . . For I will not leave you as long as I am in this world, . . . I will treasure and love you like my mother and in the next life we shall also be together." (34)⁵⁷

Perhaps it was this type of explicit closeness between certain nuns (documented on paper) that problematized attempts to clarify the line that separated holy intimacy from damaging affection and favoritism in the convent. Surely the nuns and vigilant clergy were cautiously fearful that what might seem innocent and saintly could develop into something less virtuous (or at least be perceived that way).

Epistolary Intimacy

Like the affectionate expressions of love in the letters written by Ana de San Bartolomé, epistolary intimacy is not uncommon in the correspondence between other nuns. In her study of Teresa's epistolary relationships, Bárbara Mujica notes, "Many letters reveal warm friendships and mutual support, but others expose the dark side of convent life: jealousy, infighting, cliquishness, and problematic 'special friendships'" (*Teresa*, 9). Indeed, many nuns had a model for literary affection in some of the letters written by Teresa.

The loving statements in these letters reflect the complexity of living a life dominated by silence and retreat. In a June 4, 1578 letter addressed to María de San José, for example, Teresa writes, "It is quite clear how much you love me from the way you give me pleasure in everything. I have known that all the time—and I can assure you that the love on my side is even greater, for I am amazed at my affection for you. You must not imagine I love anyone more than you, for not all the nuns appeal so much to my nature" (Peers translation, *Letters*, 573).⁵⁸

As Weber observes, Teresa's letters also clearly demonstrate the emotional attachment among the reformers, as is evident in her expression of loneliness over separations in a letter to Ana de San Alberto: "You should know that I never thought that I loved you so much, because I really want to see you" (translation quoted in Weber, "Dear," 248). Teresa openly expresses similar affection for María de San José after they are separated:

I assure you that I feel the same loneliness for you that you feel for me. After I wrote the enclosed letter, I received yours. It brought me so much joy that I was deeply touched and pleased by your apologies. As long as you love me as much as I love you, I forgive you for what's done or will be done, for the only complaint I have now is about how little you enjoyed being with me. . . . Believe that I love you a lot and that, as long as I see this affection, the rest is unimportant childishness. But while I was there, there was one thing after another and I treated you like a beloved daughter of mine, so that it caused me a lot of pain not to see as much frankness and love in you. But with this letter of yours the pain has gone away, certainly, and my affection remains. (translation quoted in Weber, "Dear," 248)⁵⁹

In similar fashion, the intimate connection between Inés del Santísimo Sacramento and Isabel de Jesús (which was formed when the illiterate Isabel dictated her life story to her scribe Inés) has been characterized as one that "stretched the boundaries of the official mandate of the Church against the formation of bonds of friendship with others" (Arenal and Schlau, 194). Likewise, when considering the surprisingly affectionate expressions included in the letters written by Ana de Jesús (1590–1621) to Beatriz de la Concepción (1569–1643) between 1608 and 1609, Concepción Torres characterizes the frank declarations as "audacious" but concludes that this was not uncommon in written correspondence between close friends.⁶⁰ The first line in a letter from Ana to Beatriz ("Believe that we are bewitched for each other because if I couldn't talk to Your Reverence I would die") led Torres to posit that it "very well could have justified Saint Teresa's fear of particular friendships between nuns" (65).⁶¹

In attempting to explain the explicit verbal expressions of affection in Ana's letters to Beatriz, Concepción Torres must first address the topic of *amistades particulares*, which leads her to the connection between same-sex affection and convent melancholy. As many theorists commented (including Teresa), melancholy in religious communities was believed to be the result of the physiological effects of excessive asceticism, and it could manifest itself through unchecked desires.

Undoubtedly, early modern ideas about women (especially single women) and melancholy influenced the way in which confessors, prioresses, and nuns interpreted illicit passions in the convent. The thinly veiled references to the melancholic temperament and uncontrolled desires in Gracián's "Constituciones del Cerro" and in María de San José's *Instrucción de novicias* offer evidence of the concern over the impulses that convent melancholy could inspire. Such widely circulated theories on melancholy are catalogued in Robert Burton's highly influential seventeenth-century study *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, an exhaustive summary of the medical, historical, philosophical, and spiritual aspects of melancholy (see Swan, 183). Significantly, as Burton describes the melancholic imagination, he includes "tribades" in his discussion of the unmarried women ("Maides, Nunnes, and Widowes") afflicted from this malady: "Their notorious fornications, those *Spintrias*, *Tribadas*, *Ambubaias*, and those rapes, incests, adulteries, masturbations, Sodomies, buggaries of Monkes and Friers" (418). Nonetheless, Burton suggests that for single women suffering from this pathology, "the best and surest remedy of all, is to see them well placed, and married to good husbands in due time" (416). Perhaps with similar reasoning, then, in her analysis of why Ana de Jesús's letters to Beatriz came close to crossing the line of appropriate intimacy, Torres associates their same-sex affection with the prohibition (and therefore absence of) heterosexual affection:

Much has been written about the individual friendships between nuns. Saint Teresa greatly feared this "melancholic humor" because of which many nuns got carried away since, due to the extreme surveillance to prevent contact with the opposite sex, they tried to satisfy their need for affection with their own sex. Perhaps the repeated sense of longing for her religious friend was an example of this melancholy, which on the other hand is not surprising, considering the harsh conditions of life in the cloister. (46)⁶²

While Torres recognizes that the letters between Ana and Beatriz are unique in that their language and topics are not apparent in any of the letters Ana writes to other nuns, family, or ecclesiastics, she concludes with the re-

assurance that other nuns also wrote with equal affection, which, for Torres, ultimately renders Ana's feelings for Beatriz typical of convent correspondence: "After analyzing other letters of members of the Carmelite order, we can verify that this intimate tone was common and in a certain sense became an epistolary style common among those of the Carmelite order" (26).⁶³ Despite the possibly routine nature of expressing intimacy in letters, perhaps these provide some indication of the sentiments that were exchanged in person when the nuns were not apart. If so, it is no wonder that convent superiors and ecclesiastics were concerned about the implications of such closeness.

Ana de San Agustín (1555–1624)

While certain letters exchanged between nuns are suggestive in their affectionate sentiments, there are also specific accounts of actual cases of special relationships in autobiographical and biographical texts written by nuns as well as their biographers. An episode in the life account of Madre Ana de San Agustín, for example, demonstrates the decisive role of the prioress in providing a remedy for nuns involved in a romantic relationship.⁶⁴ In an extended account of the episode recorded sixty years later, Ana's biographer creates a dramatic scene of lesbian surveillance through the image of a flying crucifix. Despite the common presence of the topic of *amistades particulares* in theological works, life narratives, and letters between nuns in early modern Spain, Ana's account of the special friendship that surfaced in her community is both vague and brief compared to the detailed, dramatic version penned by her biographer Alonso de San Jerónimo.

Ana recorded her life account, *Revelación de la Madre Ana de San Agustín compañera de Santa Teresa de Jesús* (Relation of Mother Ana de San Agustín, Companion of Saint Teresa of Jesus), in February 1609, and the lesbian episode is related succinctly in the following passage:

I will now tell what happened to me a few years ago. Once, when I was in prayer praying for those who were in a state of mortal sin, Our Lord told me, "Attend to what is happening in your convent," and His Majesty spoke these words through the mouth of a bronze crucifix that I had. Then another day, at night when we were preparing to retire to our cells, a nun asked me if I would do her a favor by lending her the crucifix that I had. I lent it to her, and during the night the Christ figure suddenly appeared in my room, so I asked him, "Lord, why did you come back here?" He spoke to me, saying, "Right now they are offending me." This moved me greatly, and in the morning the nun came to me and told me that the Christ figure that I had given her had disappeared from the head of her

bed where she had placed it. I told her that it had come back to me and that she should think about why His Majesty had done so. She began to cry and told me everything that had happened and how Our Lord was displeased and although it had been just one nun who borrowed the crucifix, two of them had been in the cell when it disappeared. This nun and another in a similar, later situation amended their ways from the force on their souls. Blessed be the concern of Our Lord for saving the souls of his creatures who seek his help. (88v–89r)⁶⁵

This brief passage recounts in humble yet direct terms how Ana was a key player in the miraculous conversion of lesbian desire to spiritual devotion as a result of the prioress' prayers and the supernatural eyewitness (the tattling crucifix). And while this episode is painted in broad strokes, another case of a same-sex relationship in the convent is merely mentioned in passing ("This nun and another in a similar, later situation amended their ways from the force on their souls").

Conversely, in Alonso de San Jerónimo's 1668 biography of Ana's life the lesbian episode is four times longer, as it contains more dramatic features and modifies some of the minor details. Unlike Ana's concise narrative, the account in Alonso's *Vida virtudes y milagros de . . . Ana de San Agustín, Carmelita descalza* (The Life, Virtues, and Miracles of . . . Ana de San Agustín, Discalced Carmelite) begins with an explanatory introduction to the topic of particular friendships and establishes some background information about the situation. If fact, the ecclesiastic characterizes the intimate relationship between the two nuns as one that had going on for some time, which is not specified in Ana's version:

Another incident between two nuns proves to be equally true. These women declared a "particular friendship" like those not founded in God and which are connected to misdeeds and imperfections. The errors committed were considerable and in detriment to the religious community, which was keenly aware of their closeness, although they did not know exactly what was going on between the two women when they were alone. However, the Venerable Mother, instructed by God in her leadership, shared in the knowledge of what they were doing in the hidden retreat. Women's nature . . . is so remiss when passion burns and becomes so emboldened—when its impulse rules—neither fear will stop it nor good judgment refrain it. As a result, when hearts are revealed, they usually fall to extremes. The relationship between these two nuns certainly was extreme, allowing affection to rule without control so that

in public it was innocent but in private it was more serious, whether one was entering the cell of the other at night during the time of silence (sacred time to be observed with decorum) or getting together during quiet time (not respecting the rule of silence, which prohibits this). These interactions and conversations were offensive to goodness and justice, which are the opposite of the fondness with which the two nuns related to each other. They gossiped about other nuns and they encouraged discord with others, creating less spiritual affection and revealing frank opinions. I don't dare judge what was involved in these encounters but based on the reaction from above, I suppose it was serious. The truth is that, for those who have devoted themselves to perfection, this type of sin becomes a heavier burden in the heart of God than it would be in the case of a lay person. (82v–83r)⁶⁶

Unlike Ana's account, the biographer's text names the relationship explicitly—*amistad particular*—and characterizes it as destructive to the religious community. Alonso declares that everyone in the convent knew about the close relationship between the nuns but suggestively states that no one knew the exact details of what they were doing behind closed doors. Nonetheless, what the ecclesiastic does say leaves little doubt about what he and others suspected: "The relationship between these two nuns certainly was extreme, allowing affection to rule without control so that in public it was innocent but in private it was more serious, whether one was entering the cell of the other at night. . . . I don't dare judge what was involved in these encounters but based on the reaction from above, I suppose it was serious" (82v). While Sor Ana's biographer refrains from describing the specific nocturnal activities between the two nuns, he invites his readers to use their imagination to fill in the notable silence.⁶⁷ As Jacqueline Murray reminds us in her study of lesbianism in the Middle Ages, "Relative silence, however, should not be taken as absence" (202).

Once Alonso establishes the unspeakable yet destructive nature of the same-sex sin, he can proceed to recount the episode. In contrast to the modest narrative of Madre Ana, Alonso's version emphasizes her holy character and effective leadership qualities as prioress as well as her collaborative participation with the emotional crucifix:

This was happening in the convent and the saintly prioress, with her usual devotion, one night was praying to God for those in mortal sin. Her innocent eyes crying for the sins committed in the world. Her prayer was heard, as always, but so that nobody is deceived in the process, His

Majesty responded to her through the mouth of a bronze crucifix with these words: *Attend to what is going on in your convent*. With this warning, he informed her of the news of the excesses that were going on between the two nuns. It was yet to be seen how this divine voice would work in her heart to seek the remedy, yet the fire of her devotion was intensified by the fanning from the defunct lips of a God dead in his image and alive in sorrow. The Venerable Mother took personal responsibility and did not blame the guilty women, but rather humbly she thought it was due more to her neglect than to their disorder. She understood later in her soul how to stop the damage but allowed time to discover the most appropriate remedy. Christ gave her the warning but not the manner with which she was to execute his will. She got up from prayer and went to her cell more pensive than pressured, and on the way she came across one of the guilty nuns. Although it was in her charge, she did not reprimand her with a severe look, which concealed the worries of one who lives by loving charity. The heart of the Venerable Mother was a spacious sea that, without the waves reaching the dock of her eyes (lest she frighten her daughters), she broke these waves on the rocks of her chest in order to carry inside all the pain of the crash. She showed softness in her face and this caused the nun to come to her that night to borrow the crucifix that the prioress usually wore around her neck, thus indicating that she needed help. [Ana] took it off from around her neck and kissing its feet with reverence and devotion, she gave it to [the nun] with much comfort, seeing that she desired to relieve herself of her illness, as one who diligently seeks medicine, and who could not stay for long in that fallen state, as one who asks for such a loving and devout helping hand. With these thoughts, [Ana]'s worries were comforted, not imagining that during the night the old sin would be repeated. However, old habits die hard, and although there may be good intentions, opportunity destroys them, since the will is weak. [The nuns] trusted their intentions but their will failed them as on previous nights and so their purpose and prevention left them with another opportunity to sin. At least that's how Christ explained it to her.

So, the two friends were in one of their cells at an inappropriate hour communicating as on other occasions. Irritated by the spectacle, Christ separated himself from the neck of the nun wearing the crucifix, and left the cell and went back to that of the venerable prioress. She was in prayer as usual. And seeing her bronze crucifix traveling through the air, she was shocked. Receiving him in her arms, she asked him lovingly: *My Lord, why did you come back to me?* And the divine image responded with sensitive sighs that hid so much pain: *Because there they are offending me*. This filled her soul with anguish and her heart with tenderness. (83r-v)⁶⁸

Following Ana's lead, Alonso's narrative includes the direct dialogue between the saintly prioress and the Christ figure on her favorite crucifix. Nonetheless, the biographer adds features and changes other details in order to engage his readers in the dramatic episode and emphasize the spectacle and emotion of the scene. In the later version, the miniature Christ figure is no longer at the head of the bed where Ana's narrative implied that the same-sex activities were most likely taking place. Now the bronze image is even closer and, like an unwilling participant, he must disconnect himself from the neck of one of the errant nuns. Instead of suddenly appearing in the prioress's cell, he is seen flying through the air as he seeks the loving arms of Mother Ana. In an interesting reversal of roles, it is Ana who gives Christ comfort and emotional support after he appears traumatized by the lesbian scene:

This demonstration from Our Lord (who was so loved in the convent) made the nuns' offense obvious, and seeing him come to the love of her open arms to comfort his feelings and to seek relief made the prioress feel compassion. It is clear that her honorable and loving heart was determined to amend, redeem, and nurture. And usually, to alleviate the sins of others through God, we contemplate them in ourselves first, even shedding blood and tears. So she took advantage of both blood and tears by enacting severe mortifications and crying about the disorder of others, pleading with humility and love. (83v–84r)⁶⁹

The rest of the narrative continues to detail how and why Ana handled the situation with relative tolerance and patience. Instead of reprimanding or denouncing the transgressive nuns, Ana uses prayer and compassion to lead one of the nuns to confess and seek forgiveness:

In order to request forgiveness as well as calm his grief, she spent the entire night battling with God, like Moses fighting for the forgiveness of his people. She succeeded in her efforts since the sun had barely risen when the nun who had borrowed the crucifix came to her cell with much anguish, crying. Before she even opened her mouth, her eyes said it all (if the sound of flowing tears could speak!), communicating (as if she [Ana] didn't already know) what had happened during the night. She considered her ingratitude, her inconstancy, her infidelity, her weakness, and the fear she felt when God had left her. The Venerable Mother, who was such a strict judge of herself, thought that reprimanding her would be useless and that comfort was needed instead since adding harshness to her already tortured soul would risk her remorseful state. And seeing a

heart already in anguish, turning the screws on her confusion seemed more like cruelty than punishment. She gave her much consolation, relying on divine goodness, winning her over with tears instead of irritating with blame. The saintly mother fervently proposed the correction, teaching her the way to achieve reform, emphasizing the importance of confessing her sins. The remedy was easy for the nun and the change was so profound that the new friendship between the two nuns became an example for others and such a relief for the prioress, who desired nothing more than to see her nuns serve God with perfection. (84r–v)⁷⁰

Consistent in both versions of the lesbian episode is the successful reform of the wayward nuns, achieved without the severe punishment prescribed in the rules and constitutions for such behavior. The prioress's methodology is outlined in the biography as a strategy that is both calculated and, based on the outcome, inspired. While Ana's approach to *amistades particulares* is less pessimistic than the opinion expressed in María de San José's *Instrucción de novicias* (which states that novices who display the melancholic humor cannot change without a miracle from God), the reform of the errant behavior is only possible with the miracle of the mobile crucifix.

Regardless of differing opinions and remedies for romantic relationships in the convent, Ana de San Agustín's decisions as prioress demonstrate what Teresa had proposed through her addendums to the constitutions. Weber has shown how Teresa's detailed rules on governance and punishment allowed each prioress significant freedom to decide how to deal with infractions as well as possible punishments: "Prioresses were also given considerable leeway in prescribing punishment for transgressions of the rule. Although Teresa appended to her constitutions the penal code taken from the mitigated rule of the convent of the Incarnation, she stipulated that 'the mother prioress may with discretion and charity dispense in accordance with what may be just.' Once again, we find a certain flexibility incorporated into the austerity of observance—a flexibility that is nonetheless placed firmly in the hands of the prioress" ("Spiritual," 133). Ana de San Agustín, a steady supporter of Teresa's reforms, took advantage of the authority given to the prioresses and chose not to punish the indiscretion of the two nuns, preferring instead to demonstrate the effective power of prayer and compassionate guidance.

When we consider how the rest of the nuns processed and decoded the semi-cryptic episode of the flying Christ who snitches on the special friends, surely the nuns would have seen images of a crucifix communicating with its devotees or a Christ figure disconnecting himself from the cross when the situation warrants an intervention. For example, on a larger scale, a life-size Christ could unnailed himself from the cross to give the penitent a hug

or, like Ana in her biographer's version, a saint could give the crucifix a hug. On the other hand, Christ could disconnect himself to reprimand an errant nun, as is illustrated in the medieval *Cantigas de Santa Maria* when Christ reaches down to slap a nun who was planning to break her vow of chastity (Alfonso X, Cantiga 59). Conversely, images of a flying crucifix are typically not punitive: iconography of Saint Francis of Assisi frequently portrays the crucified Christ with wings, flying to mark the saint's body with the stigmata.

Interestingly, Ana de San Agustín's flying crucifix is not the only one to intervene in a same-sex scenario. In a folktale from Chile, the heroine Florinda dresses in male garb in order to escape the incestuous advances of her father (Jurich, 72). While disguised as a man, Florinda marries a princess who is delighted by news that her new spouse is actually a woman: "All the better then," says the princess happily. "We'll live together like two doves in the world" (Pino-Saavedra, 105). However, when a suspicious relative attempts to discover the real identity of the princess's new "husband," a flying crucifix comes to Florinda's rescue: at the moment when her naked body is to be revealed during a swimming party, the crucifix miraculously changes her into a man—thus saving the lives of both women. Unlike the traumatized and tattling flying crucifix in Ana's cautionary lesbian tale, the flying crucifix in the Chilean folktale protects the same-sex couple by granting the cross-dressed partner a penis.

Even though lesbian desire is erased at the end of both narratives, perhaps the real danger of these images is found in those brief moments of sympathy for same-sex desire, such as Ana's relatively "compassionate" view of homosexuality as an illness in need of spiritual medicine (not punishment), and the surprisingly positive reaction of the Chilean princess when she discovered that she had married a woman. Like the butch nun María Muñoz after her sex change, Florinda remains a "she" even after she acquires a penis, and as a result, the same-sex couple is allowed their "happily ever after."

María de Jesús (1579–1637)

Around the same time that Ana de San Agustín was rehabilitating errant nuns in Spain, Madre María de Jesús was also confronted with more than one incident of compromising "special friendships." Like Ana, the astute nun from Mexico was able to use these situations as opportunities to reform the wayward sisters. According to Fray Felix de Jesús María's spiritual biography of Madre María (written in support of her beatification and published in Rome in 1756), the pious nun first found herself the unwitting target of a potential intimate relationship, but she quickly educated the other nun of the dangers inherent in these sinful friendships:

One time she remembered that she had received some favors from a nun in her convent, and to repay her debt (and also because of her friendly nature), the other nun was thinking about how to enter into a special friendship and relationship with her. This idea was so far from [María]'s thoughts that it hadn't even crossed her mind as a forewarning. The Venerable Mother told [the other nun]: *Sister, watch what you are thinking, as God asks us to keep our souls pure, and special friendships only separate intentions from the honesty of kindness.* She then instructed her on the teachings of impartial affection appropriate for those who profess communal life. That which does not enter through the doors of the kindness of Jesus Christ is prohibited love that rips holes and divisions in one's fortitude, as is the case with individual attachments. (263)⁷¹

While this episode may have caught the holy nun off guard, she was well aware of the damage and division that these specific affections could have on a spiritual community.

Not long after this potential scandal, María was a witness to the negative impact of a romantic and exclusive relationship between two nuns of the same *genio* (inclination). The description of this intimate relationship reveals many of the details outlined by Villegas in his seven-point test for convent friendships (preferences, discord, jealousy, dissensions, and so forth):

One of the nuns who was not fond of the Venerable Mother had entered into an intimate friendship with another nun of her type. This love was a miserable source of disgust and dissensions because they [the nuns] had made a reciprocal pact with their hearts, and agreed that any affection shown to another person would be considered an offense that usurped the possessive rights of their mutual commitment; thus resulting in a particular love that was an offense to the rest. (275)⁷²

Unlike Madre Ana de San Agustín, Sor María proceeded to reprimand the more rebellious of the two nuns, and when she was met with resistance, she continued her design to reform the nun's ways with unwavering perseverance. In fact, this project of lesbian reform (not unlike Ana de San Agustín's episode) also involved the role of the pious nun's rosary, which she placed around the neck of the resisting nun:

The servant of God [Sor María], horrified by such love that kindles the flames of jealousy to burn religious souls, chastised the one about whom we speak, either because she was the more obstinate one or because

[María] was more inspired to help her than the other. At first [the obstinate nun] made excuses and pretexts to avoid [María]; and when at the end she was offended that the Servant of God pointed out the emptiness of her excuses, she tried to turn her back on her, but the charitable Mother stopped her and with her loving arms she placed the same rosary with which she prayed around [the nun's] neck, and without saying a word she left her. (275)⁷³

María's plan for correction included somewhat creative and repetitive attempts to involve the other nun in a period of prayer, as well as a misleading endeavor to direct the wayward nun to confess her sins. When Madre María sent her a message to go to choir in María's place, the other nun responded angrily, "Tell Madre María to leave me alone since I didn't agree to any such thing" (276).⁷⁴ The Venerable Mother did not give up, but continued with a "very particular love toward the nun, but nothing sinful, because it was particular according to Christ" (276).⁷⁵ Finally one day when the two ran into each other in choir, the Venerable Mother told the other to go to the confessional and take communion. Since nuns didn't go to the confessional without making an appointment with the priest ahead of time, the other nun felt safe in going, thinking that the trip would be for naught and she wouldn't have to confess anything. However, when she arrived, she found the confessional open and the priest waiting to hear her confession. She took this as a sign from God for her to confess the truth and receive absolution for her sins. After confessing and receiving communion, she was completely, miraculously free of all love not ordained by God's will. Of course, once the repentant nun finished her confession and received the sacrament of communion, María could reappear with the final word, confirming her role in the success of the program of rehabilitating the nun. In fact, the rebellious nun, once an enemy of María, was now one of her faithful supporters (277).

Francisca Josefa de la Concepción de Castillo (1671–1742)

Madre María de Jesús was not the only nun in the Spanish New World empire to experience (and record on paper) the unwanted advances of other sisters. Mother Francisca Josefa de la Concepción de Castillo explains in *Su Vida* (Her Life) how the excessively dramatic and destructive same-sex love affairs in her convent caused difficulties and consternation for her. As Dario Achury Valenzuela notes in his introduction to the Colombian nun's life narrative, "During that time the shadow of Sappho of Lesbos was looming over the cloister of Saint Claire" (xlix).⁷⁶ Since Mother Francisca Josefa was not a prioress, nor did she feel responsible for the salvation of these lesbian nuns, her narrative emphasizes her feelings of being victimized by

the misdirected desire of others. She does, however, make efforts to deal with the advances, first through gratitude and then through evasion, but neither tactic works:

Later the enemy (seeing me in such a bad state) put forth against me the biggest battle one can imagine, due to my ingratitude for the blessings of God. He did it through some people who, through flattery and demonstrations of great love, were ingratiating themselves to such a degree that they didn't give me a moment of rest. This caused me great torment because, since I thanked them for their compliments and tried not to be unapproachable or superior, I wasted a lot of time and ended up encouraging their affections" (Francisca Josefa, 53).⁷⁷

Amidst an environment ripe for attractions and misunderstandings, Francisca Josefa describes the jealousy and conflict that surfaced as a result of other nuns' desire for her:

Since each nun was moved by the enemy to feel offended by what their girlfriends felt for me, there were arguments and disagreements among the women. All this was torture for me. I wanted to run away from all the nuns but I couldn't find a way out. I carried remorse and torture in my heart, so much that all the suffering that I had endured until that point seemed like nothing in comparison. These nuns' girlfriends felt so bad and became so angry that they made public displays of their hurt feelings when the other nuns would follow me around. I became the scandal of the convent." (53)⁷⁸

Demonstrating Villegas's warning against romantic attachments, the entire convent was affected by the possessive and vindictive reaction of the nuns who thought Francisca Josefa was involved with their lovers. While she maintains her innocence, she admits to reading a book about these romantic friendships, which is interpreted as a tactic to attract women:

They said and did unthinkable things against me. If I was reading a book about particular friendships and the damage that they cause, they would say I was just doing it to steal their girlfriends so they would come see me instead. After hearing that they were visiting me, they would kick them out of their cells. Thus the enemy would spur them on so they wouldn't leave me alone, following me with their complaints and gossip. Even now it horrifies me to remember the torment I felt and the little I could do to stop it. I was wandering around shaking and fearful, not knowing where

to hide since I was the subject of all the gossip, arguments, and divisions in the convent. (53–54)⁷⁹

Interestingly, some critics have suggested that the “lesbian”-themed book that Sor Francisca Josefa was reading was Saint Teresa’s *The Way of Perfection*: “During the episode in which friendship brings disaster, Sor Francisca reads in the choir from Saint Teresa’s *Camino de perfección*. She chooses a passage on the danger of particular friendships and thus incurs even greater wrath when she is denounced as a hypocrite” (McKnight, 141).⁸⁰ It is not hard to imagine that the ecclesiastics and nuns who wrote about treacherous special friendships would have been well aware of the “double bind”—of attempting to condemn these relationships without providing food for thought that might provoke such illicit thoughts and desires. The challenge for theologians, then, was to find ways to prohibit physical intimacy without making the forbidden acts visible.

From Francisca Josefa’s perspective, nonetheless, the narrative strategy interprets the lesbian scandal in the convent as an opportunity for mortification, the *imitatio Christi*-inspired pain and suffering recurrent in women’s mystical writing. Interestingly, Francisca Josefa alternates between describing her physical pain and that suffered by the nuns whose lovers inflicted physical violence on their girlfriends:

Then some nuns came to me crying about all the problems they had because they had tried to help me with my problems and illnesses, which were great. In addition to the great pain I had suffered my entire life, I also had sharp stomach pains, causing fainting and so many torments all over my body that I could barely stand. Since I could also see that the troubles they were suffering were real (for example, their girlfriends would slap them and throw their beds in the middle of the patio) and since I was the cause of these tortures, I wanted to comfort them but I couldn’t do anything without a great upheaval and torment because the enemy would use anything to create lies and damage. (54)⁸¹

The passage above is a vivid example of the variety and complexity in the representation of same-sex relations in the early modern convent. As a result, this episode provides a brief yet poignant window into the domestic abuse possible in lesbian relationships, even in a “celibate” spiritual community.

Ana de Jesús (?–1617)

Like Francisca Josefa de la Concepción de Castillo, the Andalusian nun Ana de Jesús (known as *la pobre sevillana*, “the poor woman from Seville”)

recorded an episode of sexual “harassment” from a mulatta servant who lived near her. Although Ana recorded her life narrative at the request of her confessor, this episode of lesbian pursuit occurred decades earlier, outside the convent, when Ana was fifteen years old. In fact, Ana did not take vows until later in life, after she had been married and widowed. Years later, when Ana recalled the traumatic same-sex episode from her youth, she demonized the woman who had gone to great lengths to seduce the young Ana. The language of this negative characterization and the references to magic undoubtedly had as much to do with the biracial identity of the unnamed neighbor as with her deviant desires:

When I was around fifteen years old, I suffered greatly because of a mulatta, half-man, half-woman, *as they say*, who pursued me as if she were a man. It was so bad that if I was anywhere but in church she would send me messages and throw money and gifts at me. And wherever I saw her it seemed like I was looking at the devil because her words were not suitable for listening to because they were so shameless. Even at home I had no reprieve because her house was directly in front of mine and my window was facing her window. She was the servant of some very sinful women and from her window all she would do all day is throw gifts at me but I didn’t try them because . . . [illegible: bottom of manuscript cut off] . . . some spells in them and therefore I suffered greatly. (BN: MS 13493, 24r; emphasis mine)⁸²

Ana initially characterizes the identity and actions of her lesbian admirer in terms of a recognizable category (“half-man, half-woman, *as they say*, who pursued me as if she were a man”). The hybrid label “half-man, half-woman” conjures images of the monstrous hermaphrodites and androgynes that were so visible during this time, but the narrative goes on to describe the unnamed mulatta as a woman whose desires are *like* those of a man, thus leaving no doubt as to the female identity of the deviant neighbor.

As the reader quickly observes, the dramatic episode highlights the nightmare Ana experienced in being stalked and pursued. Since life narratives in the convent typically followed the hagiographic *imitatio Christi* model of suffering and triumph, Ana includes dramatic detail of the mental and at times physical anguish she suffered as a result of the demonized biracial and lesbian enemy:

My house was so visible from hers that when she couldn’t see me through the window she would look for me on the roof, where I used to go to avoid seeing her or hearing her. And finding me alone she would say

loving things to me and offer me jewelry and clothing, and try to get me to lift my head to look at her. I would just cry to Our Lord, asking him why he allowed that creature to bother me so much. That house didn't have a patio so to relax I would go to the roof and if she didn't find me there she would look for me and then she would torment me. (24v)⁸³

Despite all her opponent's efforts (material, romantic, verbal, physical, logistical, and psychological, among others), Ana succeeds in her escape—sometimes by running away, but at other times by fighting back:

She threw a very expensive gold diamond and ruby necklace and a pouch full of gold coins, which seemed like the devil to me because, since I wasn't paying attention to if she was watching me on the roof, the impact from the damned coin shocked me. I grabbed it from the ground and I took the coins that had fallen out from the impact and I quickly threw the purse at her. I threw it as hard as I could and hit her in the nose. Since it was so heavy, I injured her bitterly, and as a result it took her seven or eight days to recover. Even after all that, she didn't leave me alone but continued to pursue me so much that she even asked for something of mine although . . . [illegible: bottom of page cut off in manuscript] just one hair from my head and she threw me three pieces of bread wrapped in paper and told me to eat them but I didn't take them but I placed them on a window. She said to me, "Oh traitorous evil woman, you win since I haven't been able to deceive you with promises or gifts or jewelry or any worldly object. You are stronger than death itself while any other woman would have followed me with just one word. I'll give you anything if you eat the bread that I threw at you." Then I remembered the bread that she had thrown at me and I went to see it and I unwrapped the paper and it was as soft as it was when she first gave it to me. I took it and threw it in a sewer that was near my street. I felt so stunned and I didn't know what to do because my aunt didn't believe what I told her. She would say that I didn't have anything to fear from another woman. But I didn't trust this because there was a wall she could climb up. She did climb up the wall to get to me and she tried to get in through the window and I ran away to the room where my aunt was and there I fell down and couldn't speak for over an hour. Then my aunt said, "I have to see for myself your nonsense." Then she hid behind a door and I was standing in front of the window. When the mulatta saw that I was alone she started to say what she usually did but my aunt said that behind the mulatta was a galley captain talking to the mulatta saying all the things that she was saying to me but I never saw him because I wouldn't look at her. Then my aunt took me to

the house of some friends where they hid me for more than fifteen days without telling the girl where I was. But as my luck would have it, when my aunt sent me a gift the girl followed there and hid in a quarry where she stayed day and night. She carried a short sword under her cape. One day a woman came to where I was and the girl went to fight her and she challenged her and pulled out her sword, which she handled better than a man. So I moved out of that house and that's how it ended. After a year had passed, a clerk and an officer came looking for me and I couldn't remember any reason why the officials wanted to see me and since I became alarmed the clerk told me, "Don't be afraid, we haven't come to bother you but rather you deserve the crown of prudent and wise woman," without saying anything else except that the mulatta had been arrested because she had deceived more than fifty young women and had ruined more than thirty XXXXX [illegible—words scratched out in the original] according to the clerk and officer and they took my statement, which left them shocked by the things I suffered, which are too many to relate here. May God be praised for ever, amen. They exiled that woman from her town with two hundred lashings for the glory of Our Lord. (24v–27v)⁸⁴

In case the reader is not sufficiently impressed by the pain that Ana suffered during this ordeal, she reiterates her great feat by commenting on the opinion of the authorities ("you deserve the crown of prudent and wise woman") and how amazed they were when she narrated her story to them ("the clerk and the officer were shocked by the things I suffered, which are too many to relate here"). In fact, even her pursuer commends Ana's fortitude in resisting her advances: "I haven't been able to deceive you with promises or gifts or jewelry or any worldly object. You are stronger than death itself while any other woman would have followed me with just one word."

Given the conclusion to which the episode alerts us, perhaps the mulatta servant was telling the truth about her usual success at seducing other women. Ana discovers later that she was eventually arrested for having deceived more than fifty young women, as well as having "deflowered" or otherwise ruined "more than thirty XXXXX." As the last word in this phrase is crossed out in the original manuscript, rendering it both illegible and provocative, the modern reader might guess that the author, her confessor, or some other reader found it unsuitable for a spiritual narrative. We can assume, however, that the sentence of exile and two hundred lashes indicate that the interpretation of the sexual crimes of the lesbian predator did not center on the use of an instrument or artificial penis.

While Ana provides great detail about the unwanted advances and attempts at seduction employed by the biracial neighbor (despite her final claim that the specifics were too many to include in the text), the nun's biographer Alejandro de la Madre de Dios chose to silence this extensive episode (although he develops other scenes at length). In his 1707 biography *La pobre sevillana: Vida de la fiel sierva de Cristo y Venerable Madre Ana de Jesús* (The Poor Woman from Seville: The Life of the Faithful Servant of Christ and Venerable Mother Ana de Jesús), the ecclesiastic merely states that after Ana's mother died, Ana was placed "to live in the home of a woman whose habits did not abide with or and apply to devotion, as a virtuous young woman would like. Therefore she suffered greatly during the four or five years that she lived in that home" (30).⁸⁵ Here we see the inverse of the narrative strategies used by Ana de San Agustín's biographer, who developed the lesbian episode into a passage that was four times longer than the nun's original paragraph. Unlike Ana de San Agustín, Ana de Jesús had not yet entered the convent and was not a third-party mediator in a same-sex scandal. Apparently, Alejandro de la Madre de Dios did not see an opportunity to highlight Sor Ana's sanctity in the lesbian episode, despite the nun's interest in documenting the situation as part of the years of struggle and abuse she had endured while living with her cruel aunt.

Given that, as Adrienne Martín reminds us, "Golden Age authors commonly made a fairly predictable connection between mulattos, Moors, and sodomy" (*Erotic*, 68), Ana's characterization of a mulatta servant stalking and harassing her would not have been unfamiliar to early modern readers. In fact, since the Moors in general were associated with sodomy, and Moorish women were linked to sorcery and witchcraft, Ana's reference to her lesbian suitor's use of *hechizos* (magic spells) to force the innocent victim into same-sex relations is surely reminiscent of Esperanza de Rojas's case. Furthermore, the relentless pursuit by the "lesbian predator" is intricately linked to material transactions, which Ana rejects. At every turn, the unnamed suitor tries to buy her affection with expensive gifts, jewelry, cash, clothing, and food items. Unlike the reprehensible Catalina de Erauso, who willingly accepts the lavish gifts from her mulatta admirer (whom she also compares to the devil), Ana emphatically rejects all gifts and discourages any attempts at affection.

In an interesting reverse of Ana's unsolicited attention from a lesbian servant who used sorcery and monetary gifts to tempt the reluctant teenager, the eighteenth-century Mexican nun María Josefa Ildefonsa de San Juan Bautista attempted to use magic (by contracting a sorcerer) to escape from the cloister to be near a servant girl. Various ecclesiastics and Inquisitors quickly recognized their relationship as inappropriate: "With the intention

of having what is called an *illicit friendship* with a servant girl named María Gertrudis Rodríguez (the latter having resolved to leave the convent), the declarant also wanted to leave so as not to be separated from her. . . . She had been led astray by the *illicit relationship*, and had wanted to leave the cloister to live with her friend" (translation quoted in Kirk, 53 and 55; emphases mine).

Without a doubt, intimate and possibly romantic relationships between nuns and their female servants were of great concern for ecclesiastics in New Spain. The Archbishop of Mexico City, Francisco Aguiar y Seijas, warned the spiritual leaders of convents (abbesses, prioresses, and vicaresses) to ensure that these illicit friendships did not occur and if they did, to punish them accordingly: "The most disgraceful devotions are those that take place within the convent and that the nuns have with each other, and with the secular young ladies and with servant girls, and they in turn with each other. These occasion serious problems, significant indignity and spiritual downfall" (translation quoted in Kirk, 200n31, 200n64). Like other single (and therefore susceptible) women who displayed "excessive desires" for women, María Josefa's aberrant yearnings were eventually explained in terms of mental and physical illness when she was diagnosed as "highly emotional and melancholic" (quoted in Kirk, 68).

Stephanie Kirk argues that María Josefa's case demonstrates the ways in which illness and romantic relationships became inextricably linked in the minds of the ecclesiastic authorities, but other critics are more hesitant to take these intimate attachments seriously. Asunción Lavrin, for example, emphasizes the "suggestive yet inconclusive" nature of this case, preferring to interpret the professed nun's feelings and actions as those of a confused adolescent: "María Josefa Ildefonsa was only eighteen years old when this incident took place in 1794. Was the fondness for the servant a youthful attachment of an inexperienced girl? A reprehensible friendship was one that became more profound than the love of God and the convent, but for an eighteen-year-old the reality of affection in another young woman could have indeed created an affinity that she was as yet unprepared to feel for God" (*Brides*, 239).

While María Josefa may not have been any less experienced at eighteen years of age than was Ana de Jesús at fifteen years old, it was the Mexican Inquisitors and theologians who identified the illicit friendship between the nun and servant, regardless of María Josefa's actual feelings and wishes, not to mention her changing testimonies.

AMISTADES PARTICULARES IN CONVENT THEATER

As most critics who study religious theater agree, convents were theatrical spaces where drama and music played a significant role in devotional and

spiritual exercises.⁸⁶ However, the performance of secular plays in the convents of early modern Spain was decidedly more problematic. For example, that there was controversy from secular drama in the convents of seventeenth-century Madrid is confirmed in Emilio Cotarelo's analysis of how the theater manager and director Baltasar de Pinedo was arrested and fined in 1618 for having his theater company perform Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's play *Las paredes oyen* (The Walls Have Ears) in the convent of Nuestra Señora de la Victoria. In his official statement to the authorities, Pinedo defends himself by arguing that the practice of performing in monasteries and convents was routine: "My theater company and I performed a play in the convent of the Victory, which is common practice and has always been done" (quoted in Cotarelo, 469).⁸⁷

When Borda (in his treatise for confessors and nuns) questions the appropriateness of convent entertainment, he once again stipulates that the sin is determined by the manner of viewing. When the nun asks, "Father, does listening to music, watching plays and lewd dances break one's vow?" the priest responds that the vow of chastity is broken if the nun enjoys and desires the obscenities she sees or hears, but if it is merely harmless recreation without any scandal, then probably not (45v–46r).⁸⁸

However, Borda distinguishes the nun as spectator from the nun as performer for secular audiences: "Father, if a nun removes her habit to perform in a play or another such festivity, in a party for the abbess or during the Carnival celebration, would it be considered a sin?" "Señora, I repeat again: if it is within the convent for recreational purposes, there is no harm, but if it is in front of secular persons, then it is a mortal sin" (45v–46r).⁸⁹

While some constitutions (such as the *Regla de las sorores*) prohibit the performance of secular plays as well as the practice of any nun performing in male clothing, the daughter of the prolific playwright Lope de Vega was known to write and perform in numerous theatrical pieces for the nuns in her Trinitarian Convento de San Ildefonso in Madrid. Not surprisingly, the topic of passionate relations in the monastic community was visible on the convent stage in Marcela de San Félix's allegorical *Coloquio de las virtudes* (The Virtues). In Bárbara Mujica's insightful analysis of this dramatic work, she discusses the lesbian love triangle and imagines "the laughter that these staged cat fights would have produced among the spectators" (*Women*, 198).⁹⁰ Just as Mujica refers to Teresa's comments on *amistades particulares* when discussing Marcela's lesbian plot, Electa Arenal and Stacy Schlauf remind their readers of the influence of Teresa's work on Marcela's writings (235). While both Teresa and Marcela are known to have written about the issues that deal with real and immediate problems in the convent, Marcela (perhaps ignoring Teresa's advice about avoiding the topic, even in jest) was

not afraid to address these attractions and the consequential conflict (such as jealousy) with a sense of humor.

The allegorical work begins *in medias res* as the audience of fellow nuns witnesses a lovers' quarrel between Tibieza (Negligence) and Alma (Soul) over a third-party rival, Oración (Prayer), for Alma's affections. Soul seems to have left Negligence for Prayer but slowly reconsiders her feelings and remembers the good times with Negligence:

Negligence: Please don't get mad since my lovers' quarrel with you is because I love you so much.

Soul: . . . and because of her [Prayer], I don't love you, since she is your mortal enemy. If there is anyone who disagrees with her in my house and by my side, she should leave and since I love her I hate to give her annoyances . . . Well, look, and make no mistake, Prayer will be my dearest and my life, my guide, my rule, my direction.⁹¹

Just as the two move toward each other to hug, Prayer enters to impede the reunion:

Negligence: Let's see, give me those hands.

Soul: And why not these arms?

(Prayer comes out)

Prayer: Because I will prevent it as long as I'm alive in the world.⁹²

As the allegory functions on multiple levels—as a lesson on the laxity of convent life, as well as a dramatic representation of the exclusive romantic bonds that can develop—the references to going to bed in order to indulge one's desire for relaxation surely plays on a suggestive erotic significance:

Negligence: You can go to bed now that everything is prepared.

Soul: I've never been so tired and sleepy in all my life.

Prayer: That evil habit of talking to that lady has led you to bed. Where will it end?

Soul: I can't be as completely off track as you think.⁹³

Prayer: These are all offenses that are done right in front of me.⁹⁴

It is precisely because of the pleasure that Negligence gives Soul that the latter struggles to leave her:

Prayer: When am I going to see you, Soul, without Negligence by your side?

Soul: I can't leave her. She entertains and delights me; she loves me excessively.⁹⁵

Of course, at the end, Soul must submit to the heterosexual configuration of marriage to the male figure of El Divino Amor (Divine Love), her *esposo* (husband):

Soul: Oh my love, my dear, how ungrateful I've been and how rude!

[*Then enters Divine Love (husband).*]

Soul: The glory is all yours, sweet proprietor of my life. I used to live deceived and Negligence was to blame.

Love: That's why I came to exile Negligence. Get out of here, stubborn fool.

Soul: I trust my loving Spouse; I no longer seek sweet and savory but unselfish.

[...]

Love: Oh, how I hear your favors with such pleasure. Your spirit shows how humbled you are. Now you will know how much damage the deceitful Negligence caused you.⁹⁶

Similar to the impact of casting for spectators in secular theater, when a nun is cross-sex cast to play a man (here, "Love"), the result inevitably creates the homoerotic image of two or more actresses engaged in a conflictive love triangle that results in a concurrent hetero/homosexual resolution. Furthermore, if we consider the extra-diegetic (extra-textual, extra-theatrical) significance of what the convent audience knew about the thespian nuns on stage (similar to how a celebrity's private life can influence the spectators' interpretation of his or her performance), we can imagine Marcela's willingness to poke fun at her own close friendships as well as the opposite extreme, that of those nuns incapable of forming any kind of spiritual intimacy in the religious community. Most likely performing on stage with her long-time theatrical partner and "constant and loving" companion Sor Jerónima del Espíritu Santo, Sor Marcela was undoubtedly aware of the cliques, gossip, jealousy, and conflict that can arise in the cloister when nuns create closer bonds with some sisters than with others (Arenal and Schlau, 234). If Marcela and Jerónima had had to confront gossip about their forty-year "partnership," perhaps their enactment of a convent friendship taken to an extreme was one possible way to answer the innuendo while also educating and entertaining the audience. Given Marcela's ability to sustain a close spiritual and theatrical relationship with Jerónima for decades, it is telling that in a short biography Sor Marcela points out Catalina de San José's inability to

connect with her religious sisters. This contrast testifies to the importance of maintaining a balance between the necessary and desirable love among nuns (as Saint Teresa insists in *The Way of Perfection*) and the destructive passion that the nuns portray on stage in Marcela's *Coloquio de las virtudes*.⁹⁷

The numerous writings related to the nature of same-sex friendships in the convent make evident that attempting to foster collegiality was a serious challenge for the cloister, since it risked encouraging favoritism, promoting sensual attraction, and inciting negative perceptions about closed communities. As Erasmus concludes in his 1532 satire "The Girl with No Interest in Marriage," "Not everything's virginal among those virgins. . . . Because there are more who copy Sappho's behavior than share her talent" (translation quoted in Rummel, 31).

6

Lesbian Desire on Center Stage

Convent theatre did not always shy away from addressing same-sex attractions in the cloister, but it was on the secular stage where homoerotic flirtation between women was a huge crowd-pleaser.¹ Actresses in form-fitting leggings playing male parts may have pleased spectators just as much as they vexed the moralists who raged against them. In 1614, Francisco Ortiz wrote about the seductive temptation that cross-dressed actresses posed to the typical male viewer, “since the man must be made of ice who does not burn with lust when seeing a brazen and licentious woman, who is frequently dressed as a man for this purpose” (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 494).² A year earlier, Father Juan Ferrer had expressed a similar message: “What more dangerous situation than a young man *staring* at one of these women . . . which for him is a provocation to lust” (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 252, 268; emphasis mine).³ In fact, the homoerotic implication for early modern viewers might have been unavoidable, since the male disguise involved the scandalous and sexy sight of women’s legs exhibited in revealing tights instead of being hidden beneath long skirts. Indeed, the moralists of the early modern period were well aware of the sexual power that these actresses could exert over the audience.

Because much of the same-sex romance in secular drama involved transvestism, traditionally scholars have dismissed the seriousness of any possible lesbian implications on stage, arguing that the flirtation scenes typically involve an *engaño* (deception) by a cross-dressed woman. So the deceived woman who “unknowingly” desires another woman is justified by the theatrical device, as is the transvestite trickster, who presumably flirts with women only to be convincing in her role as the male gallant. While this “excusable” same-sex desire belongs at the diegetic level (in other words, the characters—unlike the audience—are not aware that the feminine man is really a woman), several critics are beginning to question the motivation of

these “women-loving women” in a number of these plays. Perhaps these cross-dressed women are enticing for other women precisely because of their feminine appearance: “If the suggestion that women prefer feminine beauty is not exactly equitable with lesbianism, it comes disconcertingly close to it” (Bradbury, 577). Indeed, Inés’s desire for the cross-dressed Don Gil in Tirso de Molina’s *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* (*Don Gil of the Breeches Green*) is as exuberant as it is both physical and emotional:

Don Gil is not a man; he’s grace itself, / he is invention, wit, that very joy
 / which love inside its heaven keeps concealed. / I’ve seen him, and I am
 in love with him, / I worship him already. My heart groans / for time,
 slow-footed, makes me suffer so / when he’s not here and I would be with
 him. . . . Don Gil with such a beard? / The Don Gil that I love is but a
 youth, / a tender jewel, . . . A face so fair, his words like honey flow.”
 (Browning and Minelli translation, 225–27)

Like Inés in Tirso’s *Don Gil*, Estela in Ana Caro’s *Valor, agravio y mujer* (*Valor, Outrage, and Woman*) also finds herself attracted to Don Leonardo (who is actually Leonor disguised as Leonardo), explaining that it is his masculine beauty that moves her: “This gallant Adonis, / this Spanish Phoenix, / this new Ganymede, / this youthful God of Love, / this Narcissus, this Sun, / why the sight of him has / wrought such a change in my senses / that it has left in my breast / no memory of that other / forgotten man” (translation quoted in Kaminsky 253, 255).⁴ Notably, Estela’s allusions are all to Greek gods known for their effete beauty—not their male prowess. In this way, the character introduces a new kind of ambiguity through coded language for male homoeroticism (Adonis, Ganymede, and Narcissus).⁵ These concurrent references to male and female homoeroticism also appear at the close of Vélez de Guevara’s *La serrana de la Vera* (*The Mountain Girl of La Vera*), when Gila (whose lesbian desire remains an open question for viewers and readers) is martyred and her tortured body is compared to images of a young, semi-nude, and feminine Saint Sebastian. Given that suggestive and sensual images of Saint Sebastian were circulated openly but prohibited by Francisco Pacheco (official censor of visual images for Seville’s Inquisition) just two years after the performance of Vélez’s play, critics such as Kathleen Regan argue that the playwright most likely knew what he was doing when he compared Gila with the homoerotic images of the saint (301).

Significantly, the relationship between diegetic and extradiegetic desire seems to hold one of the keys to understanding the importance of female masculinity and sexual behavior. As Chris Straayer notes in discussing

cross-dressing in film, the audience is not fooled by the disguise, so each scene involving desire and the transvestite character produces paradoxical homosexual and heterosexual interpretations. For example, in Tirso's *Don Gil*, the audience sees Inés express her love for Doña Juana (whose disguise as Don Gil we might assume was not "passable" for the audience). Inés's attraction for "Don Gil" is rendered heterosexual due to the masculine disguise, yet this romantic interest is also interpreted as homosexual from the perspective of Juana as well as for the knowing spectators.

Cross-sex casting also provides an opportunity for complicating the multivalent gaze. In Cristóbal de Monroy y Silva's *El caballero dama* (The Gentleman-in-waiting), for example, the stage notes indicate that Achilles is to be played by a woman, undoubtedly to avoid the even more "inappropriate" sight of a man dressed as a woman (since Achilles must disguise himself as Aurora during the play). As a result, the cross-cast actress must play a man pretending to be a woman who, as a "heterosexual man," falls in love with another woman (leading, in effect, to the audience watching a woman dressed as a woman expressing desire for another woman). What's more, in the diegetic story, another man falls for a person whom he believes to be Aurora (actually Achilles), thus creating another layer of interpretation for the audience, which Sidney Donnell sorts out in his study of the play:

The king's love for the man in drag suddenly becomes more legitimate because s/he literally has a female anatomy underneath the clothes s/he wears, whether they are men's or women's garments. By the same token, in terms of our recognition of the performance behind the dramatic illusion, the Infanta's desire for Aurora abruptly turns scandalous because the actors involved both have female anatomies. The paradoxical relationship between characters and actors heightens the level of anxiety in the audience. (221)

In Tirso de Molino's version of the myth in *El Aquiles*, if the protagonist is played by an actress (as Tirso also recommends), the playwright "develops a few truly lesbian scenes," but if a young and handsome actor plays the role, then the lesbian overtones are avoided while other scenes then take on male homosexual significance, such as when Lisardo falls for Achilles disguised as a woman (Castillejo, 414). For David Castillejo, Tirso's *Aquiles* "is the most bold play that I'm familiar with in seventeenth-century theater with regard to sexual and communal experiences" (414).⁶

Moralists were not only worried about the impact of cross-dressed actors and actresses on male spectators. In the treatises of the period, the theater

becomes a hotly contested pedagogical space, as it was also seen as a dangerous “school” for female spectators. In 1690, José de Barcia y Zambrana warned parents of the lessons that their daughters could glean from the viewing experience: “Oh Christian parents! Didn’t you *see* your daughter before she *watched* the play—that, with her blessed ignorance of these dangers, she lived like an innocent dove? And didn’t you *see* her afterward, having *opened her eyes* to evil, she learned about what she should never know? Now she asks for new outfits, now she wants to go out, now she wants to *see and be seen*” (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 83; emphases mine).⁷

The interplay of competing gazes here is significant. Both male and female spectators are looking at the actors and actresses, and the parents and moralists among them are watching how the more impressionable audience members are viewing the performance, which affects how the spectators then see and become aware of being seen by others. To complicate matters even further, there was also concern for the provocative way in which the *actresses* looked at the theatergoers. In 1600, Fray José de Jesús María warned of the “sensual poison spewed by these wretched harlots who prance around in the plays” and the negative effect of their dangerous gaze (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 368).⁸

Moralists were not the only viewers trying to interpret the reactions of the spectators. As Lope de Vega confirms in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (New Art of Writing Plays), the recurrent plot device of cross-dressed or masculine women swaggering on stage is purely audience-driven. Accordingly, in her discussion of Vélez de Guevara’s *La serrana de la Vera*, Ruth Lundelius argues that the homoerotic characterization of Gila was motivated by public interest in the topic: “The passage from Gila’s contrary qualities to ambivalent behavior to the suspicion of deviant sexuality was one ploy Vélez counted on to attract and hold his audience” (231). It is not surprising that Matthew Stroud sees Gila as “one of the most overtly homosexual figures in the *comedia*” (“Homo/Hetero/Social/Sexual,” 66), given declarations such as “By inclination I am a man. . . . I am a woman only in my skirts. . . . On seeing / women of this type, / I go mad with pleasure. . . . if I were a man, / to you alone I would lose my heart, / and by God, even so, / I am lost!” (translation quoted in Lundelius, 223, 231–32).

Since Gila is also sketched as the cruel and vicious transgressor of social norms, she must die a violent death. Merveena McKendrick describes the ending of the play as a demonstration of “the consequences of women’s refusal to submit to the natural order of things” (117–18). Not surprisingly, scholars are still debating the nature of Gila’s sexuality (Parr and Albuixech, 36–39).⁹

CUBILLO DE ARAGÓN'S AÑASCO EL DE TALAVERA

Considering that some critics have described Alvaro Cubillo de Aragón's play *Añasco el de Talavera* (written around 1637) as "outrageous," "excessive," "curious," "sterile," unoriginal," and "flatly absurd," it is not unexpected that most scholars have largely ignored this *comedia*.¹⁰ When we take a closer look at the play as well as its criticism, however, we discover that Cubillo's *Añasco* distinguishes itself from the scores of other early modern *comedias* featuring the *mujer varonil* (manly woman).¹¹ Some believe *Añasco* to be the only Golden Age play to feature lesbian desire without use of a male disguise (McKendrick, 314). In Cubillo's play, not only is Leonor aware of Dionisia's love for her, but their friends and family discuss the erotic situation openly. In fact, the news of Dionisia's preferences for "male" activities as well as her romantic attraction to her cousin Leonor travels well beyond the immediate circle of those directly involved: "People are talking of nothing else in Talavera . . . so much that even in Madrid they are entertained by her extraordinary condition and they are composing fine verses about it."¹²

The play begins with the manly woman's customary protestations regarding the conflation of binary gender roles and biological sex categories. Dionisia complains to her servant Chacón: "There is nothing more detestable to me than having been born subject to the prison of this dress. And that men look at me as a woman, when all I feel is jealousy of their status, makes my soul restless."¹³ While Dionisia may be frustrated by gender inequalities, other characters continue to describe the protagonist (who, after act 1, is dressed in male garb) as "monstrous," "arrogant," "intractable," "a demon," "rebellious," "harsh," "strange," and so forth. The association between Dionisia's transgressive gender behavior and "irregular" sexuality is first raised directly by the protagonist's cousin Leonor early in the first act. During a conversation between Dionisia's father Marcelo and Leonor, the father first sets up a masculine-feminine comparison between Dionisia and her cousin that initially focuses on gender behavior but soon leads to a discussion of same-sex desire. Marcelo disappointingly observes: "And I have come to recognize the difference between the two women: that you are a woman but your cousin is no woman."¹⁴

Leonor confirms Marcelo's fears by noting Dionisia's abhorrence of certain feminine practices, such as pious domesticity and vain beauty regimens: "My cousin was born inclined against nature. . . . She shows vehemence when I attempt to persuade her; she makes fun of needlepoint and curses the embroidery frame."¹⁵ Leonor then recounts an episode between the two women in which the feminine cousin offered Dionisia a glass con-

tainer of beauty cream, which the latter hurled and shattered to pieces, declaring that she desires more her cousin's hands than the cream for her hands. After this explicit avowal of homoerotic desire, the father inquires about his daughter's feelings for Leonor:

Marcelo: So she does love you?

Leonor: So much that she reveals how much she loves me and she stares at me.

Marcelo: That she watches you doesn't surprise me, but that she is in love with you, yes.

Leonor: Well, whoever is in love started out by staring first.

Marcelo: What a strange character she has!¹⁶

While Dionisia's father may appear somewhat surprised by his daughter's desire for another woman, he takes no action to interfere in the homoerotic situation. In fact, the openness with which Marcelo and Leonor discuss the lesbian complication indicates a notable complacency on the part of the family's patriarch regarding Dionisia's romantic preferences.

An impassioned discussion of same-sex desire surfaces only when Dionisia and Leonor debate the nature of the former's love for her cousin. Dionisia declares, "You know that I adore you," to which Leonor replies that this kind of love is a "strange error."¹⁷ At this point, Dionisia begins to defend her passion for Leonor in platonic terms: "Isn't love friendship? Isn't it the platonic opinion that love is conforming to the influence of the stars! So if this has happened to me and it conforms with the stars, in order to obey this, how could I stop loving you?"¹⁸ Leonor counters Dionisia's insistence on the "inevitability" of her love by arguing that this desire is "imperfect" because it lacks reproductive capacity. Unwilling to give up, Dionisia (in a direct reference to Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* [*The Courtier*]) argues that phallocentric love is not reliable because it is motivated only by the *premio* (prize) of heterosexual intercourse, while she loves with no pretense of sexual gratification:

Through your unrivaled eyes I see the heaven of my paradise; in your virtue, my victory; and my reward in your hands. In your will, I see mine; in your beauty, my love; in your anger, my fear; and according to the wisdom of the discreet Courtier, who says that it is possible to love for the sake of loving. I understand this to be ordinary and natural, according to the sincerity of my affection and admiration for you, which in others is usually a lie but only my love is true. Because of the most powerful affection and most divine urgency, most people love only for the prize while I just desire to love you.¹⁹

While Dionisia attempts to interpret her romantic interest in her cousin as more sincere than that of men, Leonor confirms the difference between heterosexual and same-sex desire, but implies that there is still a “prize” (i.e., sexual pleasure) between women: “No doubt that people will believe you cousin, but there can also be sin between women; it may be different but a ‘prize’ nonetheless.” Just as Zayas’s Esteban (disguised as Estefanía) argues that true love does not seek any “reward,” one might conclude that this “prize” implies that sexual satisfaction can only be achieved through heterosexual relations. Considering that early modern legislation concerned primarily with whether same-sex practices involved penetration with an instrument, this heterocentric approach to sexuality might explain why neither patriarch in the young women’s families seems concerned about chastity or honor in speculating about the possible romantic involvement with other women. While not preoccupied with Dionisia’s desire for Leonor, the protagonists’ father is concerned about the negative effect of her gender transgression on the family’s honor. When Dionisia justifies her lack of interest in men by invoking traditional codes of female chastity (“This way, women are more secure of their honor”), her father responds by complaining about her violent masculine behavior: “Don’t you see that in the cruelty of such indecent behavior you are destroying your reputation and offending your chastity? Wouldn’t it be better if you stayed in the parlor sitting than be outside fencing?”²⁰

Oblivious to her father’s admonitions against unorthodox gender behavior, Dionisia continues her pursuit of Leonor’s affections. When Dionisia composes an amorous poem for Leonor, her verses reveal the frustration of a love destined for failure: “While I love, you forget; I am fearless and you a coward. We will always be too late; wounded by love, we are like the light that goes out on its own and the candle that burns in the darkness.”²¹ Dionisia then asks her cousin what she thought of her passionate poem, but Leonor does not react as her cousin had hoped, arguing that the verses prove the unfeasibility of love between women: “Incredible, since with such strong reasoning, you, my cousin, prove to yourself the grave error of your ways.”²²

Despite the overtly erotic nature of Dionisia’s interest in her cousin in Cubillo’s play, the protagonist’s feelings for Leonor frequently have been dismissed as another example of strictly platonic love. Citing Dionisia’s own line of argument, McKendrick insists that the character’s same-sex desire is presented as platonic, speculating that the playwright’s fear of recrimination and the desire to conform to spectators’ tastes would not have allowed him to develop a more transgressive passion: “To avoid the inevitable censure of the authorities and obtain his *licencia*, but not inconceivably because the situation’s full implications did not appeal or even completely strike home, he

made Dionisia's love in her own words a platonic one" (314). Gail Bradbury perceptively notes, however, that the traditional association between homosexuality and Platonism is not always a positive one: "One inference common to many plays, including *Añasco el de Talavera* . . . is that homosexual inclinations are an indication of the perverting influence of Platonic love" (573).

Not surprisingly, the topic of the gaze is a constant theme in Cubillo's *Añasco*. From the start, men are eager to get a glimpse of the aggressive yet beautiful Dionisia. While Diego, never having seen Dionisia, declares his love for her, the count summarizes the attraction that the "uncontrollable" protagonist holds for the men who hear of her reputation: "That new union of beauty and courage is very appealing" (act 2).²³ However, since the reclusive masculine woman adamantly opposes being seen by men when she is dressed as a woman, the hopeful male admirers must wait as their curiosity and desire increase. When Chacón comments that she is the first woman to reject male visitors, Dionisia replies, "You fool, although I was born a woman, I am different."²⁴ While Dionisia refuses to be the object of the male gaze, she openly procures her cousin's attention when she tries to show off for her: "Take up your sword, Chacón, and may my cousin, whom I adore and offend, watch a lesson on fencing."²⁵

Following the moralists' concern about how the audience would be influenced by the characters' desire, we might consider what lessons Cubillo's *Añasco* offered to female spectators of the time. While there are various instances of heterosexual desire in *Añasco* (Diego's passion for Dionisia, the mutual attraction between Juan and Leonor, and so forth), female identification with the protagonist's desire would have inevitably led to a model for lesbian eroticism. Critics and moralists alike have assumed that the sexy image of an actress in form-fitting leggings was erotic for men only, while for female spectators the disguise "provided the pleasure of vicarious freedom and adventure" (McKendrick, 320). However, what Merveena McKendrick calls "dramatic irony" (the romantic feelings expressed by an actress for another woman disguised as a man) could have also resulted in a female spectator's unorthodox *misidentification* with a character's desire that would not have been immediately obvious for heterobased viewers. For example, instead of identifying with Leonor's attraction for Juan (or even with the heterosexual resolution), a female viewer might have found affinity with Dionisia's emotional and convincing sexual passion for her cousin.

Furthermore, despite the conventional marriage resolution, Dionisia exhibits no heterosexual inclinations, nor does she undergo any sexual transformation that would logically lead to her final decision to marry Juan. Regardless of the potentially dangerous lesson in same-sex passion, the censors apparently found no reason to deny the playwright his *licencia* for the play.

As McKendrick notes, "If it did not occur to over-vigilant moralists, one wonders whether it occurred to anyone. In all probability audiences and censors alike reacted to the romantic confusion created by the use of *masculine disguise* in exactly the same way" (319). In an attempt to deny possible lesbian suggestion from Dionisia's open love for Leonor, McKendrick concludes that "any real issue of sexuality is avoided" (315), explaining that Dionisia seems to forget her obsession with Leonor after the first act. While it is true that the open flirtation scenes between Dionisia and Leonor cease with the close of act 1, there may be other ways of interpreting the protagonist's behavior in the second and third acts. Inflamed by her uncontrollable jealousy of Juan and Leonor, Dionisia starts a violent rampage that continues for the duration of the play. It is clear, however, that her actions originate from both her feelings of love for Leonor and her envy of the latter's relationship with Juan. When Dionisia wounds Juan, Leonor cries, "Oh, my cousin, what have you done?" Dionisia responds, "Your beauty is to blame."²⁶ Later, in act 2, Dionisia claims that only the memory of her cousin gives her grief. However, when Chacón implies that she seems to have forgotten her former love for Leonor, Dionisia explains that she intentionally tried to forget in order to ease her pain. One might assume, nonetheless, that Dionisia continues to hold a grudge against Juan, as he is frequently the target of her aggression and violence. Likewise, the more logical orthodox ending would include the pairing of Diego with Dionisia and of Juan with Leonor. Yet, unexpectedly, Dionisia orchestrates a conclusion that denies everyone in the play the true objects of their affections. In other words, if Dionisia cannot have her love interest, then nobody else will either.

The protagonist first declares that Juan will be her husband. When the count asks, "What about Leonor?" Dionisia replies that she shall marry Diego. Despite his assumption that Dionisia must have suddenly fallen in love with Juan, even Cotarelo y Mori notes the final aggression against Leonor: "In the end, in love with the gentleman whom she had injured in Talavera, she agrees to marry him, thereby stealing him from her cousin" (243). Certainly it is possible, then, to interpret this resolution as the final action of a spurned lesbian suitor who, despite the fact that she wished to mend relations with her father, refuses to facilitate the romance between the two heterosexual lovers (as did the lesbian Guzmán/Catalina in Pérez de Montalbán's *La monja alférez*). Dionisia's decision to choose Juan is suspect, considering that once her female identity is established and Juan is presented with proof of Leonor's chastity (since the "other man" turned out to be a woman), the logical resolution would have been the Juan-Leonor union. Similarly, Diego had also been patiently pining away for Dionisia, but is nonetheless instructed by the protagonist to marry Leonor. Although Dionisia may have

capitulated to traditional gender and sexual prescriptions, it is she and not the patriarch who maintains control over her future as well as the lives of those around her.

Inevitably, the critics who have studied *Añasco el de Talavera* have suggested reasons why Cubillo wrote the play and why the work ultimately should not be considered a “lesbian” *comedia*. Most critics privilege the heteronormative resolution. For Gail Bradbury, Dionisia remains a “would-be lesbian” because of her decision to revert to the norms of heterosexual love (577). B. B. Ashcom, however, refers to Dionisia’s interest in Leonor as a “frankly Lesbian situation, since neither woman is in any doubt about the sex of the other” (59). In 1918, Cotarelo y Mori seemed less critical of the play than have subsequent scholars, noting the “ease and wit” with which it was written (244). However, the critic also implies that the playwright’s purpose in sketching an aggressive manly woman was to participate in a “continuous irony and mockery of literate and masculine women” (244). Even the characters call attention to the violence of their roles and the popularity of masculine women on stage, such as in act 3, when Chacón says, “Well, isn’t it a bit much that during this entire play, the playwright has written it so that all we do is go around hitting each other?”²⁷ Dionisia responds by confirming the success of exceptional women who appropriate the male gender role: “You fool, it’s because nowadays people admire prodigious women, some by fighting and others by writing poetry and plays.”²⁸

Conversely, other critics find little to praise in Cubillo’s play. For example, Carmen Bravo-Villasante calls it “the most outrageous example of a manly woman who goes against nature” (108).²⁹ While conceding that Cubillo took “the concept of the *mujer varonil* to its logical conclusion,” McKendrick argues that the playwright’s intention had more to do with trying to “squeeze as much novelty as possible out of a theme which had long ago been sucked dry of all conventional originality” than with a sincere attempt to develop a lesbian romance (314). Commercial motivations may also have played a role in the lesbian plot: Whitaker sees it as “an illustration of the extremes to which a playwright would go in responding to the public’s demand for *mujeres vestidas de hombres*” (100). If this is true, then we might consider the lesbian plot a marketable draw for mainstream audiences during the seventeenth century, despite McKendrick’s assumption that it would “not appeal or even completely strike home” with theatergoers (314).

While the openly lesbian plot might provide titillation for both male and female spectators, the play’s entertainment value might also strike a humorous chord for the audience, as Elena Elisabetta Marcello argues: “We must not forget the comical potential of this roundabout misogyny. . . . The aspirations of this woman are always frustrated and the humorous comments from the

buffoon make fun of her masculine attitude" (236).³⁰ Following Aristotle's theory of comedy as an imitation of the actions of individuals who are considered inferior, the "superiority" model for humor posits that laughter indicates "the sudden glory arising from some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others" (Hobbes, 54). According to this argument, comedy has a moralizing and cathartic component employed to maintain the conformity of status quo. So if we consider laughter to be a signal of standards of conduct, we can see how a possible comical reaction to various moments in *Añasco el de Talavera* could also point to the lesbian protagonist as the butt of the jokes, which are based primarily on her open desire for another woman as well as her transgression of traditional gender roles for women. The audience, then, would identify with those characters such as Leonor who conform to conventional expectations. In this way, those viewers who feel superior to Dionisia participate in the moralizing attempt to reinforce the model for ideal womanhood in terms of both social and sexual behavior.

What are we to conclude, then, about the significance of the "only lesbian play" of Spain's Golden Age? The mere fact that Cubillo reiterated the cultural connection between gender roles, sex categories, and homoeroticism—as delineated by Juan Huarte de San Juan in his scientific treatise—leads us to conclude that the early modern audience was both interested in these topics and less naïve about alternative forms of desire than some might think. As Harry Véllez-Quñones notes, "It is preposterous to assume that homoerotic affections and behavior can only be given credence, much less critical consideration, if situated within the last hundred years of Western history" (*Monstrous*, 11). Moreover, looking beyond the importance of the play's unique treatment of same-sex desire and the possible consequences for its female spectators, perhaps *Añasco el de Talavera* deserves further consideration today because it dramatizes a marginalized sexuality that did exist during the early modern period, and not just behind closed doors or in philosophical discussions but on center stage.

FEMALE HOMOEROTICISM IN PASTORAL AND CHIVALRIC LITERATURE

While the early modern moralists were mindful of the real or potential effects of theatre on impressionable young women, recently critics have followed suit by considering the possible influence of homoerotic pastoral images on the female spectator. In particular, iconographic scenes that portray same-sex attraction between women, even when designed for the gratification of the male viewer, could have an impact on the female observer. Patricia Simons, for example, argues that the numerous Renaissance iconographic

depictions of the goddess Diana engaged in erotic activities with other women (bathing with her nymphs, for example) could prove to be subversive, since they offer an alternative option for how women could relate to other women: "Before a female audience, such paintings become instructions about chastity but they also tell tales about a female world of pleasure" (109).³¹ It is not surprising, then, that early modern ecclesiastics were alarmed by the possible effects of pastoral literature on female readers: "What else are the books of love such as the *Dianas*, *Boscans*, and *Garcilasos* . . . in the hands of young readers other than a knife in the hands of a crazy man? . . . What ought to be done when a young girl can barely walk but she's already carrying a copy of *La Diana*?" (Malón de Chaide, 25–26).³² Moralists were equally concerned with what young readers might learn from chivalric romances (typically represented by the best seller *Amadís* and the sequels featuring his son Esplandián) and other sentimental fiction (such as the widely read *Celestina* discussed in Chapter 2):

The lessons of the *Celestinas*, *Dianas*, *Boscans*, *Amadíses*, *Esplandiáns*, and other books full of amazing lies are useless and of little benefit. The only thing gained by the abuse that Satan introduces with these books is that the innocent young maiden and lad create the fire which fans the flame of obscenity where their desires and appetites for lewdness burn. And this continues to fuel the flame slowly until they experience in life what they had read in a book. (Ortiz Lucio, 3r–v)³³

Repeatedly, early modern detractors of secular fiction linked specific literary categories (pastoral, chivalric, sentimental), sin and evil (Satan, obscenity, desire, lewdness), and the power that this fiction could have on young consumers ("until they experience in life what they had read in a book"). While the alarmist ecclesiastics were explicitly concerned with what girls might learn about sexual relations with men, some of their arguments suggest that there are other hidden lessons in these books that they wouldn't necessarily experience in a heterosexual affair: "A father protects his daughter, as they say, behind seven walls to prevent her from speaking with men and yet he allows her to read *Amadís*, where she learns a thousand evil acts and desires even worse things imaginable, even worse than she might learn or desire with men" (Cervantes de Salazar, 24).³⁴ As the heterobiased fathers focus their energies on separating their daughters from men, they are also reminded that there are other erotic possibilities and that an active fantasy life stimulated by reading secular fiction can be just as damaging to a girl's chastity.

First published in 1559, Jorge de Montemayor's best seller *Los siete libros*

de la Diana is frequently referred to as *La Diana*. Given that one of the topics most frequently examined in the genre of pastoral novels is the concept of love and its manifestations in the *locus amoenus* (pleasant place), one might be surprised to find that the presence and purpose of same-sex love between women in *La Diana* have been, until recently, ignored, minimized, or considered only in Neoplatonic terms.³⁵ Despite the fact that some critics have recognized the transgressive nature of Selvagia's love for Ysmenia in book 1, critics in general have been hesitant to explore in detail the homoerotic desire in this episode.³⁶ The potentially scandalous nature of the episode may explain much of the scholarly disregard for this theme, which has been evident in those assessments that judge the same-sex love scene to be "monstrous" and "disagreeable for the reader" (Menéndez Pelayo, 273).³⁷

One recurrent justification for nonheterosexual desire in Renaissance literature has relied on theories of Neoplatonic love, which joins souls, not bodies. Perhaps the distancing of female homoeroticism from corporeal lust—arguing that true love was spiritual and therefore indifferent to sex assignment—reassured nervous readers during the early modern period and after.³⁸ There are, nonetheless, certain aspects of Montemayor's text that lead the reader to question the focus on Neoplatonism to explain female homoeroticism. Despite the manipulation inherent in her statements, Ysmenia also tries to present same-sex love between women as superior, but not by explicitly outlining its spiritual or non-carnal nature. When replying to Selvagia's doubts about the possibility of passion between women, Ysmenia argues that same-sex love is more stable and more likely to stand the test of time than other forms of love: "The love that is least likely to end is this [the love between women], surviving destiny, and which is neither subject to the change of time or fortune" (141).³⁹

Perhaps even more telling is the fact that Selvagia's love for Ysmenia is clearly physical, expressed not just through visual and verbal flirtation but also through tactile, corporeal affection: "And then our hugs were so many, and the loving comments that we said to each other, and on my part so true, that we didn't even notice the shepherdesses' songs, nor watch the nymphs' dances, nor any of the other festivities that took place in the temple" (141–42).⁴⁰ In light of this romantic evening of same-sex passion, Bárbara Mujica rightly notes that "Selvagia and Ysmenia develop a frankly lesbian attraction toward one another that cannot be explained in terms of the Renaissance Neoplatonic idealization of beauty" (*Iberian*, 130).

More important for the mapping of Selvagia's mutable desire is the fact that this infatuation does not change with the transformation of sex, gender role, or participant. Selvagia initially falls in love with Ysmenia in the Temple of Minerva while the shepherdesses are preparing for the festivities. After a

night of passionate hugging and verbal expressions of love, the deceitful Ysmenia leads Selvagia to believe that she is really a man disguised as a woman, upon which confession the latter confirms her devotion, despite the apparent change of sex: "I still contemplated that most perfect beauty [of Ismenia] . . . I told her the following: "Beautiful shepherdess, . . . from what you have heard you can understand how much the sight of you captivates me. I pray to God that you use this power over me in such a way that I may believe myself fortunate to the end of our love, which as far as I'm concerned, shall last as long as I live" (Montemayor, 143–44).⁴¹

Given that Selvagia is under the impression that her love interest is now a man named Alanio, the real Alanio (Ysmenia's identical cousin) is able to step into the role and instantly enjoy her favors. Again, the eventual knowledge that the recipient of Selvagia's undying love has not only changed costume, but is actually a different person, does nothing to extinguish her ardor: "Our love (at least on my part) remained so strongly confirmed, that although the deceit had been discovered (as it was a few days later) it was not enough to destroy my feelings for her" (145).⁴² It seems of little concern to Selvagia that the object of her desire changes gender costume, sex, or even person: what remains constant is the fact that they are all versions of her original love for Ysmenia. As Carroll B. Johnson quips, "You don't have to be Freud to see that to fall in love with someone very similar to the first erotic object does not mean the overcoming of but rather the survival of the primitive desire" (171).⁴³ Although one might question whether Selvagia ultimately succeeds in keeping her original promise of eternal love to Ysmenia, more telling is the presentation of a mutable sexuality that goes beyond the dichotomous thinking in traditional categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality, perhaps anticipating modern notions of bisexuality.

Interestingly, similar episodes—ones which include combined elements of the Selvagia-Ysmenia plot and the Celia-Felismena history (Celia falls in love with Felismena while the latter is dressed as a man)—appeared earlier in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (25:26–70) and Cristóbal de Villalón's *El Cróton de Cristóforo Gnofoso* (248–59).⁴⁴ In *El Cróton*, when the identical twins Julio and Julieta exchange clothing to amuse themselves, Melisa falls in love with Julieta, believing her to be a man. Unlike Selvagia's "neutral" position regarding desire and sex assignment, Melisa is deeply disturbed by the fact that her new love interest has turned out to be a woman, precisely because her passion remains unchanged after the unsettling discovery (Villalón, 251–52). Likewise, in *Orlando furioso*, Flordespina laments the "impossible love" between two women, as she too loves Bradamante just as deeply after learning the truth about her sexual identity.⁴⁵

Conversely, although Selvagia acknowledges the unorthodox nature of

lesbian love, her comments reflect more playful flirtation than any personal anxiety or resistance to same-sex attraction: "And then *with a smile* I got close to her and said, *half-laughing*, 'How is it possible that such a beautiful shepherdess like yourself can fall in love with someone who is not nearly as good-looking, and what's more, is another woman?'" (Montemayor, 141; emphases mine).⁴⁶ On the other hand, Emma Donoghue reads Selvagia's declaration as a sign of humility rather than transgression: "What amazes Selvagia is not that her beloved is a woman, but her own luck in winning a woman of whom she is so unworthy" (*Inseparable*, 51–52). Selvagia is not alone in her apparent tolerance of passion between women. Like the jovial comments about Estefanía's love for Laurela in Zayas's story "Amar sólo por vencer," Selvagia's narrative leads us to believe that Ysmenia participated in the homoerotic flirtation solely to amuse herself—"to mock me . . . half laughing . . . with great laughter" (Montemayor, 141, 143).⁴⁷ Moreover, Ysmenia's adventure is equally amusing for her male listener Alanio: "She told him all that had happened between us, not leaving anything out, as they both laughed out loud" (145).⁴⁸

Unlike Selvagia, who finds contentment upon falling in love with another woman, *El Crótalon's* Melisa describes her love for Julieta as "very unnatural, when a woman falls in love with another woman—not even among animals can one expect such love from a female" (Villalón, 252).⁴⁹ She is seriously distressed by her predicament, because of what seems to be a phallogocentric view of love that assumes that there can be no possible benefit from physical relations between women. Nonetheless, Melisa's desire for Julieta does not diminish, as she fantasizes of her love interest miraculously acquiring a penis:

Secluded in a room, the women went to bed together . . . and Melisa sighed with such desire that needs to satisfy its appetite . . . and then she dreamed that heaven had allowed Julieta to turn into a man . . . and Melisa's soul was so eager that it seemed that she could actually see what she was dreaming. And so when she woke up she wanted to confirm it by touching it with her own hand and she saw that her dream had been an illusion. (254)⁵⁰

As Adrienne Martín has demonstrated, what appears to be lesbian yearnings "are firmly rooted in heterosexual desire," since the narrator explores the theme of same-sex desire in terms of an erotic dream (*Erotic*, 89). This strategy is also the central concept of Fray Melchor de la Serna's burlesque poem "El sueño de la viuda de Aragón" (The Dream of the Widow from Aragón), in which the aroused widow is elated when one of the two

servants with whom she slept (Teodora) becomes miraculously equipped with a penis. Although Teodora is described even before the mysterious appearance of the male member as *varonil* (manly), the text treats her after the acquisition of the masculine organ as a woman (no beard or deepened voice) with a penis. After an hour of vigorous lovemaking (with the widow on top of Teodora), the two “awakened to find themselves in each other’s arms, and seeing themselves hugging, they were shocked” (Melchor de la Serna, 16).⁵¹ Undoubtedly intended as phallogentric yet lesbian pornographic titillation, the narrative specifies that the women are pleased by a penis—without the presence or participation of a man. In what might also be interpreted as a lesbian laudatory poem in praise of the dildo, the widow holds the “newborn” penis and speaks to it directly: “Only you can give pleasure to women; you are responsible for all their pleasure” (18).⁵² After an extended discourse with the supernatural (yet organic) “sex toy,” the two women engage in passionate sexual relations that also implicate the bed in their wild pleasure: “Upon pronouncing these words, the widow moved Teodora on top of her, and in each other’s arms, in the bed that had been resting silently, they made it move with delicate pauses. The act between the two women was so intense and they were so tired and spent—to such an extreme that their bodies finally separated and with great exhaustion, they fell asleep” (20).⁵³

A similar scene is narrated in Fray Melchor de la Serna’s *Jardín de Venus*, in which the two women frolicking in bed are disappointed by the absence of a penis until one magically appears: “They clutched each other tightly but were saddened to see smooth flesh. Then Love [Cupid] arrived very quickly and placed an arrow between them. One moved away greatly consoled after having satisfied herself; the other remained with the stiff prick” (translation quoted in Martín, *Erotic*, 85). While these variations on what Martín describes as “lesbianism as dream and myth” depict frustration and longing for a male organ to fulfill sexual desire, Ysmenia never expresses any disappointment that Selvagia is a woman, despite the complications created by the identical relative deception.

Like Montemayor’s Ysmenia, Villalón’s Julieta returns home and recounts her experience, which incites her twin brother Julio to disguise himself as Julieta with the intent of enjoying Melisa’s passion for her. Interestingly, according to the account Julieta gives her brother of her incredible adventure, lesbian sex is not imaginable, regardless of Melisa’s explicit desire for Julieta: “She was forced to reveal that she was a woman and therefore could not satisfy her desire and therefore he was not satisfied until he took her to bed himself on numerous occasions” (Villalón, 256).⁵⁴ The reader can reason that “her desire” must refer to sexual relations with a penis, and as a result, only Julio can “enjoy the love of Melisa” (256). Compared to Mon-

remayor's brief reference to "our love" (of Selvagia and Alanio), Villalón's description of the reunion between Melisa and Julieta (actually Julio pretending to be Julieta) is much more explicit: "He hugged her tight in his arms and kissed her on the lips a thousand times with much tenderness. . . . He took her to a secret room, where they could be alone and return to their sweet kisses and hugs" (256–57).⁵⁵ In order to satisfy his appetite, Julio invents an elaborate lie, explaining how his grandmother used her supernatural powers to change "Julieta" into a man. As proof of this incredible miracle (which is also the answer to Melisa's prayers), he guides her hand to his body to confirm the sex transformation: "He took her hand to touch, see, and feel it" (258).⁵⁶ Out of excitement as well as disbelief, Melisa does not rely on merely seeing and touching what she has for so long wanted, but she puts "it" to practice: "Although she saw, touched, and felt what she so much desired, she could not believe it until she tried it herself. She then said, 'If this is a dream, may I never wake up.' And so they hugged each other and kissed with much sweetness and love, and enjoying each other with great tenderness, they spent the night in pleasurable games until the sun rose" (259).⁵⁷ In sharp contrast, Selvagia's description of her relations with Alanio avoids any mention of explicit sexual acts or any of the details of flirtation and hugs that were emphasized in her adventure with Ysmenia: "I also believed that Alanio truly loved me, and from that moment on, he was greatly enamored of me, although he didn't show it by his actions as he should have. And so for a few days we treated our love with the utmost secrecy" (145).⁵⁸ As Adrienne Martín reminds us, the physical passion between Ysmenia and Selvagia is not genital: "The two women then fall into each other's arms in a suggestive scene that contemporary queer critique would safely surmise as lesbian, although not genital" (*Erotic*, 103). The description of the relations between Alanio and Ysmenia, however, allows for the possibility of genital contact precisely because of the narrative imprecision.

Like Montemayor's *Diana*, the best-selling chivalric romance *Tirant lo Blanc* (written by Joanot Martorell in the late fifteenth century) includes female homoerotic scenes designed to arouse the male protagonist while also exciting any readers who are titillated by sexual tension and deception. After Pleasure-of-my-life (Plaerdemavida) hides the knight Tirant in the princess's room, the conniving woman begins to flirt with and fondle her for the voyeuristic benefit of the knight:

Look, Tirant: do you see my lady's hair? I kiss it in your name, you who are the best knight on earth. See her eyes and mouth? I kiss them for you. See her delicate breast, one in each hand? I kiss them for you. Look how small, firm, white, and smooth they are. Look, Tirant, behold her belly,

her thighs, and her sex. Ah, woe is me, if only I were a man! . . . Only Tirant's hands deserve to touch what mine are touching, as any man would happily gulp down such a morsel. Tirant, who saw everything, was delighted by these jests. . . . After they had joked awhile, Carmesina got into her bath and asked Pleasure-of-my-life to undress and join her. . . . While they were talking, the Easygoing Widow entered, and the princess invited her into the tub. Then the widow stripped down. (Rosenthal translation, 371)

Similar to other scenes in secular fiction (such as María de Zayas's stories and Montemayor's *Diana*), this episode in *Tirant lo Blanc* provides lessons on the heterosexual desire of Tirant (and one woman's willingness to participate in same-sex flirtation toward that goal) but through the reaction of other female characters, it also instructs female readers about eroticism between women. The princess is not bothered by the pre-bath fondling (described as "jest"); in fact she invites both Pleasure-of-my-life and the Easygoing Widow to undress and bathe with her. Later, when she believes that Pleasure-of-my-life is in her bed caressing her breasts and private parts, she is merely annoyed, evidently because she is trying to sleep. It is Pleasure-of-my-life who orchestrates the hetero/homoerotic scene, instructing Tirant to lie down beside the princess and place his hand upon her body

whose nipple, belly, and sex he began to caress. The princess awoke and cried: "God Almighty, what a nuisance you are! Go away and let me sleep!" Pleasure-of-my-life replied: "What a way to talk! Here you have just bathed and your skin feels so smooth and soft. How I love to touch it!" "Touch me where you like, but not so far down!" "Go back to sleep, and let me caress this body of mine," said Pleasure-of-my-life, "for I am here in Tirant's stead." (Rosenthal translation, 374)

Since the caresser was actually Tirant and the voice speaking in his place was Pleasure-of-my-life's, when he becomes more aggressive in his fondling, the princess stirs in bed and asks: "What do you want, wicked woman? Let me sleep! Have you gone mad, trying to do what is against nature?" (374). It seems clear that the princess is aware of the cultural prohibition of female sodomy ("Touch me where you like, but *not so far down!* . . . trying to do what is *against nature?*") but only when she discovers that her same-sex fondler is actually a man does she panic and begin to consider her honor and reputation. In his study of the novel, Mario Vargas Llosa rightly notes both the sexual violation and the latent lesbianism in the hetero/homoerotic scene in *Tirant lo Blanc*: "Plaerdemavida is a participant in the daring and romantic

violence. . . . Her games with the princess show her to be a moderate, unconscious lesbian" (24). Despite (or because of) the sensuality of scenes such as this, *Tirant lo Blanc* was both a commercial and critical success during the early modern period, with numerous reprintings and translations. It was even saved from the bonfire of dangerous books in *Don Quixote* (as was Montemayor's *Diana*) when the priest praised it not only for its entertaining plot and characters, but most of all for its quality of style: "I've found it to be a treasury of enjoyment and a mine of entertainment. . . . Because of its style, this is the best book in the world" (Lathrop translation, 50).⁵⁹

Considering the disruptive potential of the homoerotic episodes and the likelihood of their being read as lessons on lesbian sexuality, writers such as Martorell and Montemayor anticipated certain reader discomfort with or disapproval of the topic. The sexual deception in *Tirant lo Blanc* is enacted for the pleasure of the white knight, and the way in which Selvagia in *La Diana* narrates her episode reassures her interlocutor from the start that the lesbian desire she experienced was not mutual and was ultimately unsuccessful. When Selvagia describes how she had expressed her attraction for Ysmenia, she emphasizes the latter's hidden intention of going along with the affair to amuse herself: "Ysmenia (that was the name of the woman responsible for all my worries) had already planned how she was going to mock me, as you shall soon hear" (Montemayor, 141).⁶⁰ Similar qualifiers are likewise sprinkled throughout her narrative: "pretending . . . to laugh at me . . . half laughing" (142–44). On the other hand, Selvagia highlights her own sincere feelings of love for Ysmenia (and for Alanio): "I was more in love with her than I can express. . . . On my part so true . . . so real . . . at least on my part, so solid" (141–42 and 145).⁶¹ Despite Selvagia's insistence that Ysmenia did not reciprocate her genuine feelings of love, the fact remains that the latter willingly participated in passionate physical contact with a partner of the same sex.⁶² Since secular fiction was considered problematic for female readers because of the potential for immorality, we must consider whether this dangerous didactic opportunity for impressionable young readers could be homoerotic as well as heterosexual.⁶³ If female readers were to learn from Selvagia's behavior in Montemayor's novel, they would conclude that both women and men, in a variety of gender performances, are viable recipients of their love and passion.

Within this complex relationship between same-sex love scenes and reader response, Montemayor's text provides the reader with a lesson of more than one option for alternate female desire. The author presents a vision of female sexuality that goes beyond oppositional categories of heterosexuality or homosexuality, as is evident by the fact that Selvagia's transmutable desire can flow from Ysmenia (presenting herself as a woman) to

Ysmenia pretending to be a man who is pretending to be a woman, and then to Alanio (a man who was impersonating his look-alike female cousin, who is pretending to be a man), and finally to Alanio as himself, who we must not forget is identical to the original object of Selvagia's love: a beautiful but somewhat masculine woman. Even though some critics might argue that lesbian desire has been neutralized by the orthodoxy of the denouement, Selvagia's previous homoerotic passion is neither negated nor precluded as an option for the future. While early modern medical theory demonstrates the fluidity of sex assignment, Selvagia's story shows her narratee and the reader just how flexible female sexuality can be. Whether this process is labeled Neoplatonic, lesbian, bisexual, or queer, the result is a potentially subversive model for female sexuality that presents a variety of gender and sexual combinations involving both women and men as the objects of desire for other women.

LESBIAN DESIRE IN THE BEST-SELLING FICTION OF MARÍA DE ZAYAS

In the realm of mostly male-authored popular entertainment (whether in drama, pastoral, chivalric, or sentimental fiction), female same-sex desire is temporary and eventually gives way to a heterosexual conclusion. This traditional heterobias plot, however, seems to be interrupted in the prose fiction of the best-selling author María de Zayas. Unlike conventional denouements, the climactic finale of the *Desengaños amorosos* (1647) (*The Disenchantments of Love*) reveals an unwavering preference for the exclusionary community of women. This diegetic prioritization of life choices for women articulates the protagonist's decision to reject marriage in favor of a secular life in the convent as a separatist utopian space for women only. Since this homosocial resolution does not specify how desire functions in this non-heteronormative system, the reader is allowed to consider multiple options, depending on his or her own tastes and experiences. Before the reader arrives at this thought-provoking and nontraditional ending, she or he has already considered perspectives that disrupt heterocentric discourses through the author's portrayal of same-sex desire in three of the stories from both best-selling collections of framed novellas, the *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* (1637) (*The Enchantments of Love: Amorous and Exemplary Novels*) and the *Desengaños amorosos* (1647) (*Disenchantments of Love*). In two of Zayas's novellas, "Amar sólo por vencer" (Love for the Sake of Conquest) and "La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor" (Aminta Deceived and Honor's Revenge), the author engages various arguments that defend desire among women.⁶⁴ At the same time, however, despite the consistent defense of same-

sex love between women, these plots may also be read as normative within dominant discourses, since they at least initially appear to be based on patriarchal constructions of female homoeroticism rather than on transgressive expressions of lesbian subjectivity. Nonetheless, an analysis of how Zayas's text portrays female homoeroticism in comparison to its depiction of male homosexuality leads the reader to reconsider the "normative" function of same-sex desire in the text.

"LOVE FOR THE SAKE OF CONQUEST"

Perhaps the most extensive and explicit discussion of lesbian desire in Zayas's work is found in "Amar sólo por vencer." In this novella, Esteban, disguising himself as a woman, transforms himself into "Estefanía" in order to gain access to his love interest, Laurela. Despite the heterosexual motivation behind the disguise, some critics see Estefanía as a spokesperson for Zayas, who was perhaps hiding behind her characters to express ideas about unorthodox desires: "The author defends love between women as less selfish and more pure than that between men and women. . . . Doña María speaks with complete freedom because her ideas come from the mouth of a gentleman, and therefore free of suspicion, she can express her ideology regarding homosexual love" (Montesa Peydro, 208–9).⁶⁵

In "Amar sólo por vencer," female homoeroticism is less of a threat than a heterosexual affair outside the confines of marriage. Only as Estefanía is Esteban free to display his passion for Laurela openly. Moreover, other women in this story join Estefanía in discussing the spiritual advantages of love between women. This Neoplatonic expression of same-sex desire attempts to define romantic relationships between women as chaste and therefore morally superior to the physically based heterosexual love:

"Since the soul is the same in male and female, it matters not whether I'm a man or a woman. Souls aren't male or female and true love dwells in the soul, not in the body. One who loves the body only with the body cannot truly say that that is love; it's lust, which brings only repentance after physical satisfaction because that love wasn't in the soul. The body, being mortal, tires of its food, while the soul, being spirit, never tires of its nourishment."

"All right, but for one woman to love another woman is a fruitless love," one of the maids commented.

"No," said Estefanía, "it's true love, for loving without reward is the purest kind."

"Well how come men," asked one of Laurela's sisters, "ask for their

reward after they've loved for only four short days and if they don't get it, they give up?"

"Because they don't really love," Estefanía responded; "if they did love, even unrewarded, they'd never give up. True love is the very substance of the soul and so long as the soul doesn't die, love won't die. Since the soul is immortal, so love will be also. But in loving only with the body, if they don't enjoy the body, they'll soon desist and forget and go seek satisfaction elsewhere. If they do attain their ends, surfeited, they move on to seek more of the same elsewhere."

"Well, if that's the way it is," said another maid, "then nowadays men must all love just with the body and not with the soul." (Boyer translation, *Disenchantments*, 224)⁶⁶

In this Neoplatonic defense of love between women the assumption is that lesbian attraction is "fruitless love" and "love without reward." Consequently, true (same-sex) love between women does not yield the *provecho* and *premio* associated with phallic-based carnal lust. Regardless of intention, Estefanía's arguments protect lesbian desire from attack, since this seemingly "nonphysical" love is exempt from scrutiny on the basis of honor and chastity.

Despite its insistence on the spiritual nature of same-sex love between women, the text emphasizes Estefanía's physical attraction for Laurela: "Estefanía went with her mistress to attend her until she was tucked in. By virtue of the deception, her eyes enjoyed sights they could never have seen had it not been for her false disguise" (217).⁶⁷ Although only the reader knows that Estefanía is actually Esteban, the other household members are well aware of the nature of Estefanía's passion for Laurela, without the privileged knowledge of the cross-dresser's true identity.

Ultimately, the reaction of others provides an important indication of the attitude toward female homoeroticism in Zayas's text. When those close to Laurela believe that Estefanía is a woman passionately in love with her, they find amusement in the idea of lesbian desire:

For the power of love can also include a woman's love for another woman just as it does a suitor's love for his lady. . . . Estefanía's words followed by a deep sigh, made them all laugh at the notion that she had fallen in love with Laurela. . . . Again they all laughed, further convinced that Estefanía had fallen in love with Laurela. . . . They all burst out laughing. . . . In spite of the fact that Estefanía was always telling her of her love, she and everyone else thought it was simply folly. It amused them and made them laugh whenever they saw her play the exaggerated and courtly role of

lover, lamenting Laurela's disdain and weeping from jealousy. They were surprised that a woman could be so much in love with another woman, but it never crossed their minds that things might be other than they seemed. . . . She burst out laughing and her sisters and the other maids joined in. (214–25)⁶⁸

Apparently the idea of passionate love between women was a source of humor and entertainment for the women close to Laurela. The idea of lesbian desire as nonthreatening entertainment is supported by the comic element present in many female homoerotic images. In Zayas's text, both men and women are amused by the possibility of lesbian passion. As Mary Gossy observes, "Both Laurela and the other girls react to Estefanía's protestations of love with giggles, that well-known escape valve for unwelcome sexual tension" (26). Indeed, the women are frequently entertained by the idea, as is the patriarch of the family. Laurela's father entrusts the most intimate aspect of his daughter's care (dressing, undressing, and so forth) to a woman who has openly declared her physical attraction and love for Laurela. Despite this knowledge, Laurela's father finds the situation amusing and is clearly not worried about the family's honor: "'That's splendid,' Don Bernardo responded, 'and we can expect lovely grandchildren from such a chaste love'" (*Disenchantments*, 216).⁶⁹ One could assume from the father's joke here that honor, chastity, and the control of female sexuality are solely related to issues of reproduction and paternity.⁷⁰

Although the idea of lesbian desire provides lighthearted yet nervous tension when Estefanía publicly woos Laurela, the behind-the-scenes whispers of the maids and ladies-in-waiting reveal a hint of incredulity that a woman could be so aroused by another. Like the curious nuns who used convent frolicking to get a glimpse of María Muñoz's anatomy, the women in Laurela's house also tried to determine Estefanía's true identity: they, "half joking, half serious, playfully tried to test whether she was a man or a woman" (225).⁷¹ These games, according to Mary Gossy, reveal the deeper issue of how seeing lesbians in writing is linked to the presence or absence of a penis: "But 'lesbian' is by definition not visible to the gaze that looks for castration. Lesbian is about something more than castration; looking for castration or the lack of it misses the lesbian point" (27). Like Fontanella's satirical verses imagining the "sword" hidden underneath Zayas's *sayas* or skirts (discussed in the next chapter), "Amar sólo por vencer" is driven in large part by the mystery of what might suddenly sprout out from beneath Estefanía's skirts.

Not surprisingly, after returning to male garb, Esteban's comments reveal an equally phallogentric view of female sexuality. While trying to convince

Laurela that he is really a man, Esteban relies on the popular, hetero-normative rejection of the possibility of erotic feeling between women: "Is it possible that you've been so blind that you haven't seen in my love in my jealousy, in my sighs and tears, in the feelings expressed in my songs and poems, that I really am what I say and not what I seem? Who's ever seen a woman fall in love with another woman?" (227).⁷²

Esteban is not the only character who openly rejects the idea of any possible sexual satisfaction between women. One of the young women of the household also wonders what Estefanía plans to gain by loving another woman: "'What I'd like to know,' the other maid commented, 'is what Estefanía thinks she'll get out of loving my mistress Laurela. If I hadn't beheld her beauty and seen her a few times undressed, my heart has often leapt at the thought that she might be a man'" (225).⁷³ One might question whether the young woman is referring to the phallogentric *provecho* or *premio* when she asks what might be gained from female homoerotic desire. The speaker implies that this passion would make sense if Estefanía were a man. However, given Estefanía's beauty, this possibility is doubtful, and, perhaps more important, the idea that Estefanía could be a man is scandalous considering that she has seen Laurela naked on numerous occasions.

Perhaps the ambiguous and arbitrary nature of gender identity and desire is best dramatized in Esteban/Estefanía's promise to Laurela that his or her identity is chosen and not fixed: "She'd be Estefanía so long as Laurela didn't want her to be Don Esteban" (228).⁷⁴ As Laura J. Gorfkle concludes, Zayas's text is subversive precisely because it seeks to deprive "hegemonic culture of the claim to naturalized or essentialist (gender) identities" (86). Despite this apparent rebellion, there is no liberation for Laurela at the end of "Amar sólo por vencer." After Laurela submits to a heterosexual affair with Esteban, her father orchestrates a violent retaliation to punish his daughter's transgression. While the patriarch of the family may have been pleasantly amused by Estefanía's passion for Laurela, he later ensures the death of his daughter to punish her for a heterosexual relationship with the same person in the form of Esteban. Likewise, when Laurela ponders such a "scandalous situation," she is not referring to Estefanía's lesbian desire for her but rather to a heterosexual male who is disguised as a woman in order to disrupt the private sphere of a protected virgin. The message remains clear: desire between women does not pose a threat to the patriarchal order as heterosexual love outside the legal confines of marriage does.

After engaging in physical relations with Laurela, Esteban's attitude toward desire is drastically different in comparison to Estefanía's previous declarations of love. In fact, Esteban demonstrates exactly what Estefanía had warned earlier: "Beautiful Laurela, the things one does simply to satisfy

one's physical appetite cannot last, particularly when they involve as much danger as I now face. I am prey to harsh revenge from your father" (231).⁷⁵ Indeed, Estefanía was more capable of true love than was Esteban, who knew only sexual appetite. Not only does Esteban change his tune with the change of dress, but also the general tone of the story shifts from the jovial and pleasant discussion of lesbian desire to the ominous and sinister chain of events involved in heterosexual passion that results in a violent homicide. Similar to the assessment of lesbianism as the lesser of two evils when compared to heterosexuality outside the confines of marriage, Zayas's story graphically demonstrates how homoerotic desire between women is preferable to transgressive sexual relations, which are performed with men.

"AMINTA DECEIVED AND HONOR'S REVENGE"

Like the discussion of same-sex attraction as chaste entertainment in "Amar sólo por vencer," "La burlada Aminta y venganza del honor" also presents female homoeroticism as nonthreatening desire. When the wily Flora confesses, "You know my tastes are more those of a gallant than of a lady, and wherever I see a lady, particularly one as beautiful as this lady, I can't take my eyes from her beauty and my heart grows tender" (Boyer translation, *Enchantments*, 55), her declaration has led critics to describe her as the only woman in Zayas's work who explicitly expresses her own lesbian desire.⁷⁶ Although I agree with this assessment, I would propose that homoerotic passion here functions in a manner quite different from what might initially be expected. If we consider Flora's comments in their context, we find that they are used by the speaker to manipulate another listener: Aminta. Again, the reaction of the listener may tell more about the role of lesbian passion than simply the potential intention of expressing same-sex desire. First of all, although Flora is talking directly to Jacinto, her statements are clearly articulated for the benefit of the nearby Aminta. Flora audibly expresses her physical attraction for Aminta as a way of endearing herself to the latter. Aminta's reaction to Flora's declaration of lesbian desire indicates that Flora's strategy worked:

With your great beauty, which certainly should cause envy rather than suffer it, I don't know why you seek any other. If you take a mirror in your hands and look at yourself, you will satisfy all your desire. Your beauty deserves more to be loved than to love. But I shall now have higher regard for myself; I'm flattered by the favor you've shown me because pure love gives pure fruit. I beg you, please tell me what it is in me that most pleases and delights you so that I may esteem it more and prize it in myself. (56)⁷⁷

Far from being scandalized or even surprised, Aminta is clearly flattered by Flora's attraction to her. Reminiscent of the comments expressed by Laurela's father in "Amar sólo por vencer," Aminta assumes that this same-sex passion is chaste and does not pose a threat to her honor "because pure love gives pure fruit." Despite Aminta's apparent belief that Flora prefers women, comments made by the narrator lead the reader to another conclusion. We soon learn that Flora's flattering statements about Aminta were designed to trick her: "With great skill, the crafty Flora gradually placed bonds on the innocent Aminta to bring about her total downfall. Flora disguised her lies with such color of truth that it was no wonder Aminta believed every word" (56).⁷⁸ Given that Flora is described as having lied to manipulate Aminta, it would be hard to accept her prior statements as a sincere expression of lesbian desire. Moreover, Flora's sexual behavior elsewhere in the story seems to be decidedly heterosexual: she orchestrates the cruel deception in order to assure herself of ultimately maintaining her affair with Jacinto: "As a reward for her resourcefulness, she expected to end up with her lover, abandoning Aminta to her misfortune and dishonor" (60).⁷⁹ In fact, the narrator condemns Flora not because she is attracted to women, but because she manipulates and deceives them: "As a woman who's evil, you have the advantage over men. Love excuses Don Jacinto, deception excuses the unfortunate Aminta, but for Flora there is no excuse" (59).⁸⁰ Although the text plays with the idea of physical attraction between Flora and Aminta ("Flora and Aminta greeted each other with an embrace, causing proper envy in Don Jacinto" [58]), these comments seem to function more in accord with the intricate *engaño* plotted by Flora and Jacinto against Aminta.⁸¹

Neither Estefanía (Esteban) in "Amar sólo por vencer" nor Flora in "La burlada Aminta" is a reliable character who expresses sincere feelings of lesbian desire. However, through their comments and the more telling reactions of those around them, we can approach a possible view of same-sex love between women in Zayas's texts. In both cases, this passion is dismissed as both harmless and pointless, whereas heterosexual love (as well as male homosexual love in "Mal presagio casarse lejos" [Marriage abroad: Portent of doom]) proves to be destructive for women.

"MARRIAGE ABROAD: PORTENT OF DOOM"

Considering the absence of scandal surrounding female homoeroticism in Zayas's texts, it is significant to note that male homosexuality is treated in a very different way. In fact, a comparison is difficult to avoid given the structure of the text in the *Desengaños*. When Greer notes the lesbian attraction between Laurela and Estefanía in "Amar sólo por vencer," she con-

nects the possible importance of this theme to the novella that immediately follows, “Mal presagio casarse lejos,” given the scandalous presence of desire between men in the latter story (Greer, 114). Since Zayas’s texts seem to silence any specific details of physical relations among women, we might question why she allows the reader to witness a physically explicit homosexual episode involving two men in “Marriage Abroad.” Compared with the jovial and positive depiction and reception of female homoeroticism in “Amar” and “Aminta,” the explanation of how Doña Blanca’s husband preferred his handsome young male servant to his wife is presented with implied reprobation by the narrator Doña Luisa:

The prince had a page who wasn’t over sixteen, young and handsome. The prince loved him so dearly that he would have exchanged his wife’s favor for the page’s, and the page was so proud in his privilege that he seemed more the lord than the servant. He ruled over everything and acted so ill-tempered that people tried harder to please him than the prince. The prince confided his most intimate secrets in this page and valued him above everything. Whenever Doña Blanca would ask what her husband was doing, she’d be told he was with Arnesto (which was the page’s name). Sometimes, half in jest, half in earnest, people would tell her that the prince loved his page more than her. (Boyer translation, *Disenchantments*, 255–56)⁸²

When Blanca eventually finds the two men together in bed, the narrator and the protagonist are equally repulsed by what is characterized as a hideous and sinister display of male sodomy:

Beautiful ladies and discreet gentlemen, I wish I could be so subtle that you would understand what she found without my having to say point-blank because of its *hideousness* and *enormity*. In the bed she saw her husband and Arnesto engaged in such *gross* and *abominable* pleasures that it’s *obscene* to think it, let alone say it. At the sight of such a *horrendous* and *dirty* spectacle, Doña Blanca was more stunned than when she had beheld Lady Marieta’s corpse, but she was braver. The moment she set eyes upon them, she left more quickly than she had come. They weren’t ashamed or embarrassed by her having seen them, instead they were amused and roared with laughter. One of them said: “That sure spooked the Spanish woman!” (264–65; emphases mine)⁸³

Since Zayas’s text clearly criminalizes this sexual relationship between men, we might assume that if genital relations between women were likewise

presented in the previous story they also would have been subject to criticism. As Jacqueline Murray reminds her readers, "In the absence of either a penis or a substitute, male writers minimized the seriousness of the sin" ("Twice," 199). Considering the divergent treatments of male and female homoeroticism in Zayas's fiction, one wonders whether the homicidal response of Laurela's father in "Amar sólo por vencer" had more to do with his own homosexual attraction than with the fact that his daughter's affair with a man was an affront to the family's honor. Learning that the "woman" (Estefanía) whom Don Bernardo had been trying to seduce for months was actually a man might have motivated the cruel and calculated brutality against his daughter. In other words, the father's previous enjoyment of Estefanía's attraction for Laurela quickly turned to violence when he realized that his own feelings were neither as heterosexual as he thought nor were Estefanía's as lesbian as he presumed.

While Zayas's stories explore same-sex desire in a secular environment, perhaps the concern for female homoeroticism within convent walls (discussed in Chapter 5 of this study) is significant in light of the ambiguous convent resolution in the denouement of the frame tale of the *Disenchantments*. Lisis's final decision to break her engagement to Diego and live instead among women disrupts the heterosexual plot resolution that traditionally has been believed to neutralize the temporary yet potentially transgressive same-sex flirtation scenes involving the *mujer vestida de hombre* (cross-dressed woman) motif that was so popular, especially on the early modern stage. At the end of Zayas's collection of novellas, the protagonist of the frame story does not die, marry, or become the bride of Christ: "Doña Isabel took the habit but Lysis remained secular" (*Disenchantments*, 404).⁸⁴ Lisis's decision to reject marriage is motivated more by a desire for freedom from the suffering in heterosexuality than by a calling to become a nun: "I'm going to save myself from the deceptions of men" (403).⁸⁵ Through Lisis's declaration, the text offers a glimpse of a separatist utopian vision, for the text clarifies that Lisis's actions show the best possible option for women: "The beautiful Lysis lives in the cloister, still fearful that some deception might disenchant her because she did not learn directly from her own misfortune. This end is not tragic but rather the happiest one you can imagine for, although courted and desired by many, she did not subject herself to anyone" (405).⁸⁶ Perhaps this "Amazonian call to forget about men and be true to the collectivity of women" (Ordóñez, 9) marks the completion of Lisis's earlier promise to show "the world to be different from the way it's always been" (367). By presenting the renunciation of heterosexuality as the ideal arrangement for women, the text proposes separatism as a "final solution to the problems of women's oppression in male-dominated society" (Andermahr,

134). In fact, feminist separatist utopias are frequently synonymous with lesbian utopias. Kristine J. Anderson notes that “not all utopias ‘for women only’ are explicitly lesbian, however, although it is difficult to see how they could be otherwise in the absence of men” (85).

Many critics have argued, nonetheless, that Zayas’s ending reflects a preference for female bonding that may or may not lead to a “utopian model of sexuality” (Gorfkle, 86).⁸⁷ Some scholars have interpreted these “female-only” relationships as nonsexual. Marcia Welles for example, understands Zayas’s version of the love between two women to be spiritual as opposed to physical (308) while Ruth El Saffar argues that the textual separation of the sexes shows a favoring of “celibacy and female bonding” (205). Similarly, Amy Kaminsky believes that Lisis does not take vows upon entering the convent because she “merely wishes to remain celibate and live her life among her women friends and relatives. For that, holy vows are unnecessary” (391).

I argue that Zayas rejects the traditional patriarchal models that seek a cathartic resolution in order to create an ambiguous utopia that does not limit the options for female desire within the prescribed separatist community. While the portrayals of female homoeroticism in “Amar sólo por vencer” and in “La burlada Aminta” seem to follow other early modern models of tolerance for nonpenetrative same-sex desire (as long as the depictions are designed for the male spectator’s pleasure and the final resolution is heteronormative), Zayas’s ending creates tension by not adhering to expected patriarchal plots. The author anticipates this reader discomfort when she justifies her conclusion: “Now, illustrious Fabio, to comply with your request that I not give a tragic end to this story, the beautiful Lisis lives in the cloister. . . . This end is not tragic but rather the happiest one you can imagine” (405).⁸⁸ Like the silencing of specific sexual details in the representation of desire between women, the transgression of Zayas’s separatist resolution proves that what is *not* included is just as telling as what *is* included, if not more so. Unlike Jorge de Montemayor’s pastoral best seller or the numerous male-authored chivalric romances, only the woman-authored fiction of María de Zayas provides the “happily ever after” promise with a women-only community. And despite this nontraditional twist, in the end what all these popular works of fiction seem to have in common is the portrayals of female homoeroticism that remains open to a variety of meanings for both male and female readers and viewers.

7

Looking Like a Lesbian

Despite the assumptions of some scholars that Renaissance writers displayed “an almost active willingness to *disbelieve*” in lesbian desire (Brown, *Immodest*, 9), images of same-sex desire between women were readily available in popular entertainment. Neighbors, enemies, and moralists were known to “out” women suspected of same-sex trysts. Lesbians were punished for sexual acts at public events that were meant to warn and dissuade, but which may have also provided lessons on homoerotic desire to curious spectators. The ways in which different observers understood the sight of a woman “hanged with that artifice around her neck with which she had carnally lain with the two women” (as described by eyewitness Francesc Eiximenis) may have varied. One can only speculate today how these scenes influenced the vigilant, homophobic, or merely nosy neighbors who denounced suspicious women. What was it that really provoked the indignation of the bystanders who nicknamed Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma “the little canes”? Surely the prying neighbors who testified against Ana Aler and Mariana López in Aragón and the local observers spreading rumors about Catalina Belunçe and Mariche de Oyarzún in San Sebastián had certain preconceptions about what lesbians might be doing behind closed doors.

Whether the images of lesbian relations in early modern Spain were manipulated for legal or medical classifications, sexual titillation, or perhaps gossip “outings,” these diverse discourses seemed to offer differing guides for how to identify the type of woman who desired other women. While some ecclesiastics were devising tests to determine whether friendships between nuns were carnal or spiritual (such as the 1635 “special friend” test outlined by Father Bernardino de Villegas), other legislators and authors seemed more concerned about the presence or absence of a penis or its substitute (whether real, artificial, imitative, or imagined) in same-sex relations. The

medical community was likewise interested in how an overgrown clitoris could become a monstrous body part capable of penetrating a woman's vagina like a male penis. Other genital irregularities, such as intersexuality or sex-changes, were equally troublesome for determining anatomical identity and subsequent sexuality. The hermaphroditic condition claimed by Elena/Eleno de Céspedes necessitated multiple medical examinations, which involved both sight and touch, while the curious observers who wanted to know the truth about María Muñoz (the manly nun who suddenly grew a penis) included local men, nosy nuns, and eventually a priest: "We saw the male genitalia with our own eyes and we touched it with our hands." Despite the appearance and tactile confirmation of an anatomical penis, the text privileges sex-at-birth and continues to refer to her as a "she" who is free to find a wife of her own.

Early modern medical wisdom would have people believe that masculine women such as Catalina de Erauso and Queen Christina were nonconformist due to a prenatal sex mutation, explaining that their consequent female masculinity (and the related deviant sexuality) could be confirmed through visual observation: "She is *recognized* after birth as having a masculine nature, in her speech as well as in all her movements and behavior" (Huarte, 609; emphasis mine). These medical-legal narratives and early print media suggest that to understand lesbians in early modern Spain, seeing (and feeling) is believing.

Whether or not speculation about lesbian relations was based on credible evidence, some women participated in their own outings quite willingly. Surely long-term partners Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma would have suspected that their dramatic arguments in public spaces—calling each other sodomites and whores—might draw an unsympathetic crowd. Other women who participated openly in the publicity of their attraction for the same sex appeared confident that other factors would redeem their transgressive desires. In fact, when Catalina de Erauso and Queen Christina made public appearances and agreed to sit for multiple portraits, they provided one answer to the enduring question: what does a lesbian look like? Despite some apparent resistance to her sudden fame, Erauso must have known that the publicity might help her achieve legal consent to live as a man regardless of her confirmed female genitalia.

LOOKING LIKE A LESBIAN

Francisco Pacheco's famous portrait of "Lieutenant Miss Catalina de Erauso," painted in 1630 (see Figure 2) is an important piece of visual material evidence of early modern lesbianism. While most twentieth-century viewers of

Pacheco's portrait see Erauso as a masculine woman, others view her in terms of an "effeminate man."¹ For example, when Nicolás León notes that "her expression is hard and inexpressive" and that the portrait "gives us the idea that it pertains to a man and not to a woman," he articulates the incredulity that recurred among observers of both the historical individual as well as her artistic representation in the portrait (125).

Indeed, as captured in the portrait or portraits, it was Erauso's unfeminine demeanor and her "passability" that inspired an episode in Alonso de Castillo Solórzano's 1637 picaresque novel *Aventuras del Bachiller Trapaza* (Adventures of Bachelor Trapaza).² Based on his recollection of portraits on exhibit in Salamanca, the protagonist decides that his young (and therefore beardless) male travel companion should pass as Erauso (in effect, a man impersonating a woman who passed as a man). Their scheme depends on the popularity of the international celebrity, which would enable them to charge admission to curious villagers anxious to see "her" in person (Castillo Solórzano, 172–73). Reminiscent of the bishop in Peru who needed physical confirmation of Erauso's female identity, the would-be impersonator fears what might happen if local officials demand that "she" disrobe to prove her claim to be the real Lieutenant Nun (173).

The impetus to find links among physical features and sexual behavior was standard in ancient complexional physiology and physiognomics, as both disciplines assumed that an individual's appearance, personality, and behaviors were the result and indication of one's particular complexion.³ While early modern metoposcopy (the assessment of the forehead) frequently included analysis of the sodomite through the distinguishing marks on his face, it is telling that some twentieth-century physicians have also used Erauso's portrait as "scientific" evidence of her sexual orientation: "Relying on the portrait and on the written memoirs of our heroine . . . the neuro-endocrine pattern seems to correspond to a hypophysial-suprarenal hyper-functioning, framed by an excess of masculinity and accompanied by *certain erotic abnormalities* that are quite frequent in the psychosomatology of such a condition" (Sánchez Calvo, 224 and 228; emphasis mine).⁴ Conversely, some critics have used the portrait to question whether *other* women would have been attracted to Erauso's physical appearance. Melveena McKendrick, for instance, sees the portrait as evidence that "these tales [of lesbian attraction] were probably untrue" (214).

Early modern visual depictions of mythological "femmes" could also conjure images of unruly sensuality. In her discussion of how Renaissance iconography of the goddess Diana bathing with her nymphs was most likely conceived as erotic stimulus for heterosexual men, Patricia Simons argues that these sensual images might provide an opportunity for "cross-viewing."



Figure 2. Engraving based on Francisco Pacheco's portrait of Catalina de Erauso. (Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid)

For instance, some women might have seen "sensual implications not necessarily realized by the male members of their society. Gestures and situations perhaps produced for the titillation of male patrons may nevertheless have suggested sensual contact to women also" (Simons, 97). This male heterosexual bias is obvious in Brantôme's anecdote about such paintings, as the woman viewer is aroused by the female homoerotic image but transfers her passion to a sexual encounter with a man:

They beheld a very beautiful picture, wherein were pourtrayed a number of fair ladies naked and at the bath, which did touch, and feel, and handle, and stroke, one the other, and intertwine and fondle with each other, and so enticingly and prettily and featly did show all their hidden beauties that the coldest recluse or hermit had been warmed and stirred thereat. Wherefore did a certain great lady, . . . losing all restraint of herself before

the picture, say to her lover, turning toward him maddened as it were at the madness of love she beheld painted: "Too long have we tarried here. Let us now straightway take coach and so to my lodging; for that no more can I hold in the ardour that is in me. Needs must away and quench it; too sore do I burn." (Allinson translation, 33)

While Brantôme emphasizes that the homoerotic images had a decidedly heterosexual impact on the female viewer, Simons reminds her reader that the French author might have overlooked other viewers and other types of erotic gazes in considering the painting: "At the same time, however, the legitimization he gives to the visualization of lesbian sex and its consumption by female viewers could have encouraged less heterosexualized experiences for some women" (94).

Not unlike the sensual representations of bathing nymphs, the eroticized body of the witch in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century images revealed both a voyeuristic interest in female sexuality and a fear of women appropriating male sexual power. In his study on magic, witchcraft, and visual culture in early modern Europe, Charles Zika suggests that the recurrent focus on witches' power over male sexual anatomy and performance (as we see repeated in Kramer and Sprenger's *Malleus Maleficarum*) may have indicated an unspoken fear of lesbian sexuality as well:

While representations of lesbianism and female auto-eroticism were not unknown in the early sixteenth century, witchcraft was one of the few genres within which male fears about female homosexuality were expressed. . . . As with other genre scenes, such as those of the bathhouse, for instance, scenes of witchcraft could give expression both to male fascination with female sensuality and also to deep-seated male fears of lesbian sexuality, with its threat of impotence and castration. (281 and 292)⁵

While secular portraits of witches, manly women, and mythological femmes depicted sensuously with other women could provide material evidence for what a lesbian might look like, religious portraiture also raised concerns over how some women were looking at these images. When discussing the complex relationships between Teresa de Jesús and her followers, Christopher C. Wilson turns to the print engravings of the reformer and her protégées to explain how these close relationships were portrayed visually for varying purposes. Analyzing the portraits of two of Teresa's closest followers, Ana de San Bartolomé and Ana de Jesús, Wilson argues that their pictorial images must be viewed in terms of the competition between the two Anas



Figure 3. Engraving of Teresa de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé.
(Courtesy of Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid)

and their supporters, revealing “the attempt by rival cults to promote the case for each nun’s sanctity” (“Taking,” 79).

While the engravings utilized the intimacy between Teresa and the two Anas, the women’s protégées Beatriz de la Concepción and Leonor de San Bernardo had their own rivalry to promote, and they worked tirelessly for

the beatification of their respective mentors. The intimate relationship between these nuns (revealed in the letters mentioned in Chapter 5) “helped to fuel iconographic presentation of the privileged status of each Ana” (Wilson, “Taking,” 80). One engraving by the Antwerp artist Jean Baptiste Barbé (1578–1649), for example, focuses on the inseparability of Teresa and Ana de San Bartolomé: an angel draws them together symbolically as a privileged couple while they gaze up toward the Holy Trinity (Wilson, “Taking,” 80). (See Figure 3.)⁶

While the numerous paintings and print engravings produced after Teresa’s death dramatize the conflicts among the reformers by highlighting Teresa’s special relationship with opposing sides, the privileged intimacy between the nuns portrayed on canvas or paper could also be used in ways that might inspire the kind of destructive love that Teresa warned against. For example, among the various inquiries about *amistades particulares* (or what was also referred to as *mala amistad* [bad friendship]) raised by the nun in Andrés de Borda’s manual is the role of visual stimulus and mental fantasy. The inquisitive nun asks whether receiving pleasure from looking at a portrait of a past or current love interest would break her vow of chastity, and the confessor responds:

With regard to the portrait, Señora, it is not easy to receive pleasure from a portrait of a person with whom you are having or have had an inappropriate friendship without receiving pleasure from the person. Therefore, as many times as you take pleasure from looking at the portrait is the number of times that you break your vow. With regard to other paintings, even if they are lewd, I would say that if there is a deliberate indulgence of sensual pleasure, then you sin against your vow; if not, then no. (46v)⁷

While impressionable nuns could interpret both secular and religious images as erotic, the visual images referenced in Borda’s manual were portraits of romantic partners, flirtations, or past lovers. In this way they were linked to actual sexualized communications or activities, potential future experiences, or an erotic fantasy that might not be acted upon but is sinful nonetheless. Interestingly, as Borda establishes the portrait as possible pornographic material that could be used to stimulate erotic fantasies in the convent, the ecclesiastic also notes that even if the image were “obscene,” the viewing of it might not constitute a transgression of the nun’s vow of chastity if she did not deliberately gaze at it for the purpose of impure contemplation for pleasure or “delectación morosa.” In other words, the nature of the image mattered less than the way in which the one looked at it. One might wonder,

then, what Borda would have said about the “lewd” visual and textual images published in the popular *Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*.

While at first glance one might mistake the scene in Figure 4 as women at a meat market, upon more careful study of the engraving we see a very different scenario: this is not a butcher shop but a dildo shop, and the customers are upper-class (perhaps Spanish) women. This late seventeenth-century engraving used as the frontispiece for one Latin edition of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* dramatizes some of the reasons why “imagining” lesbians was so compelling and problematic in the early modern period. Surely when Luisa Sigea (born in Toledo in 1522) wrote a Latin dialogue between two women, Blesilla and Flaminia, praising the virtues of contemplative country life far from the corruption of the urban court (*Duarum virginum colloquium de vita aulica et private*), she had no idea that a century later her erudite work would inspire Nicolas Chorier’s *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*, “one of the most obscene Latin works of the later Renaissance” (Castle, 147). Even as the friendship between Blesilla and Flaminia in Sigea’s original colloquy occasionally expressed itself passionately (“with all our strength, led by



Figure 4. Dildo shop: Frontispiece of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*. (Courtesy of the British Library.)

the love for you with which I burn" [470]), this intensity is communicated only through the ardor of discussion and there is little material to provide direct subject matter for Chorier's text.⁸ While Sigea's dialogue was not published during her lifetime, copies were circulated frequently among the educated elite and her reputation as a distinguished female scholar spread throughout Europe (Prieto Corbalán, 35–36). One can easily imagine how Chorier might have had knowledge of Sigea's dialogue (and that her father was French only increases the probability) and might have used it as a source of inspiration for his 1659 *Aloisiae Sigeae Toletanae satyra sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris* (The Sotadic Satire on the Secret Loves and Lusts of Luisa Sigea of Toledo; commonly referred to as *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea*). In fact, evidence suggests that readers believed that *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* was a female-authored work, frequently (mis)taking it as an authority (alongside Harvey and Graaf) on the medical history of female sexuality (Turner 282–83). As James Grantham Turner argues, Chorier's work (with its "faux-female" voice) "has probably done more to constitute the *discours de la sexualité* than any other early modern text" (281).

Predictably, Chorier's erotic colloquy enjoyed immediate and phenomenal success in Europe. The Latin publication was a best seller and it was soon translated into French, English, and Italian, as well as going through fifteen Latin editions during the following decades (Castle, 147). Unlike Sigea's chaste dialogue, Chorier's text uses his protagonists Tullia and Octavia to discuss a spicy list of erotic topics, including masturbation, copulation, the clitoris, S&M, dildos, sodomy, and—not unexpectedly—lesbianism. Their second colloquy, for example, takes place in Tullia's bed and is devoted to the theme of sex between women. Even though Chorier's text was undoubtedly conceived to arouse the male reader, some of the more salacious moments in the women's Sapphic conversation resonate with details from the 1603 criminal case against *las cañitas* Inés de Santa Cruz and Catalina Ledesma. When Chorier's Octavia pleads, "You are thrusting your hand lower . . . Ah, ah, ah, but please, Tullia, why are you fingering that spot?" her narration resembles the auditory testimony of the neighbor who had listened to what Catalina and Inés were doing in bed ("She heard that they were panting and puffing and breathing heavily, ah, ah, ah"). Other similar references include comments about genital wetness during sexual relations: Octavia asks, "But really you have watered my garden with rain; I feel all wet from it. What filth did you pour over me, Tullia?" while Catalina testified that after Inés had been on top of her with their genitals pressed together, "she discovered that her private parts were wet and she didn't know if it was urine or if Inés had poured something down there" (20v).⁹ Interestingly, both women (fictional and historical) attempt to avoid responsibility for the sexual "pollution," as

they blame their partners for having “poured” something unpleasant down there.

Like Brantôme’s *Lives of Gallant Ladies*, Chorier’s text also seems to “out” the inclination of Spanish women to participate in same-sex relations by using a dildo to achieve sexual pleasure: “The women of Miletus used to make themselves pricks out of leather eight inches long and broad in proportion. . . . Even nowadays this tool plays a considerable role in the feminine boudoir of Italian *and especially Spanish* as well as Asiatic women and is regarded as their most precious bit of paraphernalia. They hold it in the highest esteem” (Chorier, 154; emphasis mine). The message that women were “rushing” to have sex with other women (“The Italian, Spanish, and French women love one another; and if shame did not restrain them, they would all rush headlong against each other in rut” [153]) and probably using a beloved sex toy was graphically revealed in the frontispiece referred to earlier. As Sarah Toulalan clarifies, it is unlikely that the illustrations to this edition were engraved to explicate specific episodes from the text: “The frontispiece shows women entering what appears to be a shop selling highly realistic dildoes of varying sizes, a scene that does not take place in the narrative” (236). Nonetheless, the engraving does provide its own narrative, one that complements the suggestion that lesbians in Spain regarded the dildo “as their most precious bit of paraphernalia.” And not just the female criminals in the jails of Seville who used strap-on dildos with one another; if we are to believe the scene in the frontispiece, upper-class women could easily obtain such sex toys at their local shop.

Since Chorier attributes his erotic text to Luisa Sigea (who, ironically, had been compared to Sappho during the sixteenth century), the scandal caused by the false “outing” sparked debate over the Spanish scholar into the nineteenth century (see Prieto Corbalán, 37). Vicente Jimeno, for example, came to her defense by writing about the controversy in his *Escritores del reino de Valencia* (Writers from the Kingdom of Valencia) in 1747, before the actual author of *The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea* had been identified. Curiously, Jimeno seems to be equally offended that the apocryphal text implicated the honored humanist Juan Luis Vives in one brief episode, despite the fact that the author (and his readers) attributed an entire pornographic book to the respected woman from Toledo: “In order to defame Luisa he made her the author of some lascivious dialogues by publishing them under her name and in the seventh dialogue he concocted a heinous lie (which alone is unbelievable) aiming to denigrate Vives” (quoted in Prieto Corbalán, 41–42).¹⁰

As we see in Jimeno’s comments, outing someone (or trying to undo the outing) can say just as much about the informant or defender as it does about the accused. And while the testimony in criminal cases against women

accused of having sexual relations with other women relied, in part, on rumor and gossip, some early modern references to women not embroiled in same-sex scandals suggest a more veiled “outing” through coded innuendo. In an attempt to decode what is frequently ambiguous enough to allow for multiple interpretations, scholars, general readers, and general consumers have been speculating about the desires of authors, texts, and characters for centuries.

The scarcity of biographical information about María de Zayas, for example, has inspired numerous critics to conjecture about the author’s love life. Many have concluded that Zayas made the same life choices as her protagonist Lisis who, as we have seen, decided to reject heterosexual marriage for a “secular” life with female companions in the convent (Barbeito Carneiro, 163). Despite a lack of documentation (we do not know if Zayas married, remained single, or entered the convent), many twentieth-century scholars have heterobiasedly assumed that she had experienced a devastating love affair with a man. The evidence cited to justify the “disappointment in romance” theory is found in the pessimistic and bitter nature of the *Desengaños* (the 1647 sequel to the more upbeat *Novelas* published ten years earlier) and its climactic anti-marriage resolution:

Although there are absolutely no documents to prove it, we can be certain that during these years Doña María had to confront the harsh reality of a great romantic disappointment. What actually happened to the novelist we do not know and probably never will, but a comparative analysis of the *Novelas* that form the first part of her work with the *Desengaños* that make up part 2, provide us with sufficient psychological information to affirm that some event of a sentimental nature disturbed her deeply, and consequently caused a change in her private life. (Hesse, 19)¹¹

As some readers try to visualize Zayas’s desire for others and their attraction for her, they frequently imagine how physical appearance factored into a perceived failure in her romantic relationships. Some critics assume that she must have been beautiful and therefore had the opportunity to experience the romance that she wrote about in her stories: “There is no doubt that she was attractive; nor that she was unlucky” (Hesse, 20).¹² Conversely, others propose that despite her probable unattractiveness—an assumption based on the absence of any references to her beauty by her contemporaries—she must have had enough personal knowledge about love to have written about passion with such “realism”:

It doesn’t appear that she ever married, and being a woman admired for her intellectual attributes, she never found anyone to praise her beauty,

which would have been strange during that time for any woman who was beautiful. Could we go so far as to say that she might have been quite ugly or, to put it more delicately, not very attractive? In any event it is difficult to imagine that someone capable of describing love and romantic relations with such realism and evidence of having a real knowledge of them would never have been in love or experienced passion. (Rincón, 10)¹³

Following the problematic logic of the “attractive or ugly” debate, others have considered the author’s age for further speculation, assuming that older women were unlikely candidates for passionate relations: “If we accept that the author was born in 1590, it doesn’t seem realistic that this pessimism was the result of misfortune in her love life. Nonetheless, she could have suffered other kinds of disappointments from men” (Yllera, 19).¹⁴

After decades of heterosexual speculation on Zayas’s love life, the rediscovery of a document circulated (and recited) during the seventeenth century has given some scholars material to reconsider previous conjecture. In what Greer describes as a “poetic roast,” the Catalan writer Francesc Fontanella’s satirical characterization of Zayas in a 1643 literary competition emphasized her masculine physical appearance, including a possible reference to sexual activity with a phallus substitute:

Doña María de Sayas [Miss Mary of Skirts]
 with her manly face,
 although she wore a skirt,
 she played with her moustache proudly.
 She looked like a gentleman,
 but it will soon be discovered
 that a sword is not easily hidden
 under feminine “skirts.” (quoted in Kenneth Brown, 231)¹⁵

Undeniably provocative, these 1643 verses were not the first indication that Zayas’s peers may have suspected nontraditional inclinations. While Lope de Vega praised Zayas’s literary skills by invoking Sappho of Lesbos, he was not the only one to make this association.¹⁶ Josef de Valdivielso also mentions Sappho in his approbation of Zayas’s novellas, while Alonso Bernardo de Quirós writes suggestively of her androgyny in his dedicatory verses: “You are neither woman nor man” (quoted in Ruiz-Gálvez Priego, 15).¹⁷ Even Zayas’s intimate friend Ana Caro de Mallén praises the author as the “new Sappho” (*ibid.*, 9).

After reading such evocative references to the female masculinity and lesbian desires of one of Spain’s best-selling (and now canonical) women

writers of the early modern period, it seems impossible to avoid the likelihood that her contemporaries might have questioned her romantic preferences. In her study of Zayas's work, Greer raises the issue but remains cautious about making definitive conclusions:

Should we read this portrait as a reliable indication that Zayas was "butch" in appearance and perhaps in sexual orientation? Lope de Vega compared her talents to those of Sappho, a fairly common standard of reference for women poets in her day, but Zayas omitted Sappho from the list of "foremothers" she included in her preface. . . . She raises and then rejects [in "Amar sólo por vencer"] the possibility of sexual love between women. . . . Reading these clues together with the portrait, we might conclude that Zayas was carefully avoiding the admission of lesbian attraction. . . . On the other hand, we can also read the portrait as a backhanded compliment, a masculinization of Zayas in the flesh that is a grotesque admission of her effective intrusion in the realm of literary discourse generally considered a masculine preserve. (32–33)

Equally persuasive are the early modern references to Zayas's close relationship with fellow writer Ana Caro. When Alonso de Castillo Solórzano (in his 1642 novel *La garduña de Sevilla* [The Filcher from Seville]) praises Zayas's literary talent, he links the author to her companion Ana Caro: "Doña Ana Caro de Mallén accompanies her in Madrid, a lady from our Sevilla, to whom is due no less praise" (Lundelius, "Spanish," 230).¹⁸ Interestingly, there is also evidence that the two women lived together: "I remember having read in a manuscript from the past century that she was an intimate friend of the Sevillian poetress Doña Ana Caro de Mallén, and that she lived for a while in her company" (quoted in Hegstrom, *Traición*, 15).¹⁹ Since even less is known about Caro's personal life, the prospect that the two women enjoyed a romantic relationship would be difficult to dismiss as a possibility without substantiation to the contrary.

Despite the compelling evidence that belies a hetero-exclusive reading of Zayas's personal life, critics have been hesitant to suggest that Zayas and Caro may have been more than friends, even though heterosexual speculation has been commonplace in Zayas criticism. However, when María José Delgado proposes a queer reading of the female characters' desire in Zayas's play *La traición en la amistad* (Friendship Betrayed), she extends the conjecture to the author's *understanding* of lesbian attraction: "The principal theme in this text is 'female friendship' and all the diversity with which it can be represented. What do the relationships between the female characters

look like? Did Zayas give us any specific examples regarding what she *understood* about this dynamic? Can we see lesbianism in this relationship?" (380).²⁰ It is not by chance that Delgado uses the coded "*entendía*," which in Spanish refers to an insider's acknowledgment of same-sex desire.²¹ In other words, was Zayas writing about romantic feelings between women because she "understood" this desire?²² Implicating Ana Caro and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz as other women who may have "understood" lesbian attraction, Delgado asks, "Did they or did they not have passionate relationships with women? Did Zayas or Caro ever marry? We do not know but we do know that Caro and Zayas lived together" (381).²³

Considering how intimate friendships between women—especially if their literary works revealed a preference for portraying unorthodox sexual attractions—inspired speculation, it is not unexpected that the love poems featuring the passion of one woman for another written by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695) have attracted attention for their lesbian potential.²⁴ In fact, the Mexican nun wrote numerous amorous poems dedicated to and inspired by women, especially her patroness María Luisa Manrique de Lara y Gonzaga, Condesa de Paredes (Marquesa de la Laguna). In the poem "Excusing herself for silence, on being summoned to break it," Sor Juana writes:

My lady, I must implore / forgiveness for keeping still, / if what I meant
as tribute / ran contrary to your will. / . . . I love you with so much
passion, / neither rudeness nor neglect can explain why I tied my tongue,
/ yet left my heart unchecked. / The matter to me was simple: / love for
you was so strong, / I could see you in my soul / and talk to you all day
long. / . . . Let my love be ever doomed / if guilty in its intent, / for loving
you is a crime / of which I will never repent. / This much I decry in my
feelings— / and more that I cannot explain; / but you, from what I've
not said, / may infer what words won't contain." (Trueblood translation,
43, 45)

Even more erotic and less easy to dismiss as a product of the Neoplatonic tradition of souls uniting, the burlesque sonnet "Inés, Dear, With Your Love I am *Enraptured*" confronts the reader with same-sex desire in every verse, concluding with "Inés, to one thing I *aspire*, / that your love and my good wine will draw you *hither*, / and to tumble you to bed I can *conspire*" (quoted in Castle, 177). The repetition, range, and progression of passionate emotions such as bliss, jealousy, longing, anger, and lust that culminate in the final verse inviting her beloved to bed is so explicit that it is difficult to imagine that modern critics did *not* consider the homoerotic potential of

these verses. To borrow the words of Amanda Powell in her analysis of Sor Juana's love poems to women, "They are addresses of lyric seduction, and, despite historical shortcomings the terms *lesbian*, *Sapphic*, or *queer* are apt descriptors. Encountering the homoerotic display in the poems, we cannot avoid imagining women romancing women, and it is perverse to pretend that we can" (211).

Other scholars such as Asunción Lavrin are much more cautious about Sor Juana's love poetry for women as well as convent intimacy in general:

Yet, the issue of "special friendships" among nuns intrigues some present-day readers. The friendship of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz with the Vice-reine Countess of Paredes has been interpreted to suggest a homoerotic relationship, although the term did not exist in the seventeenth century. Based on circumstantial evidence such as the nature of her poetry, historians are reluctant to accept this theory. On the other hand, bonding among women in a completely female universe was to be expected, although those involved may not have understood their relationship as homoerotic. Under the rubric of "special friendships" we may have a hint of liaisons among some nuns, although the evidence is sparse. (*Brides*, 239)

In his seminal study on Sor Juana, Octavio Paz offers various justifications and explanations for the explicit passion for women in Sor Juana's poetry, but he doesn't seem completely convinced by his own arguments, as he repeatedly returns to the nagging possibility that Sor Juana might be a lesbian:

These sentiments of loving friendship were legitimized, in a manner of speaking, by the philosophical and literary conventions inherited from Renaissance Neoplatonism. . . . From this perspective Juana Inés' impassioned poems to María de Gonzaga, Countess de Paredes, will seem less strange to modern readers. . . . I repeat: I perceive an ambiguity in Sor Juana's relations with some women friends, but those inclinations, as expressed in her poems, are synonymous with more complex sentiments, not with lesbianism. . . . Why this antipathy to marriage? To think that she felt a clear aversion to men and an equally clear attraction to women is absurd. (Peden translation, 90, 95, 102, 111)

Just as Lavrin rationalizes that María Josefa Ildefonsa's decision to leave the convent to be with a servant girl was due to the inexperience of an eighteen-year-old (discussed in Chapter 5), so Paz goes on to conjecture that Sor Juana's youth prevented her from understanding her true sexual desires.

Referring to the possibility that she rejected marriage because of a “clear attraction for women,” Paz claims:

In the first place, because even if that supposition were true, it is not likely that while she was still so young she knew her true inclinations; in the second, because only by attributing to her an intellectual and sexual license more appropriate to a Diderot heroine than to a girl of Juana Inés’s age and social class in New Spain could she cold-bloodedly have chosen as refuge an institution inhabited exclusively by persons of the sex that supposedly attracted her. (111)

In a slightly more neutral interpretation (which nonetheless attempts to side-step the lesbian elephant in the room), Alan Trueblood sees Sor Juana’s relationship with the countess as “a mixture of love and friendship in which affection, devotion, gratitude, respect, and a Neoplatonically accented idealization all have a part” (13).

As a counterpoint to the traditional critical unease about the possibility of Sor Juana’s lesbianism, scholars such as Nina M. Scott and Emilie Bergmann examine the poet’s literary work and its unavoidable homoerotic imagery, without attempting to either “out” the Mexican nun or protect her from what are perceived as negative assessments or labels.²⁵ In her analysis of María Luisa Bemberg’s controversial film *Yo, la peor de todas* (I, the Worst of All), Bergmann reminds us that unlike the tendency of Latino and Spanish American lesbian and gay poets to accept Sor Juana’s lesbianism as fact and adopt her as their patron saint, Bemberg’s film is much more reticent. In fact, the passionate poems Sor Juana dedicated to her patron are absent in the film while “lesbian subjectivity is exclusively attributed to the vicereine” (Bergmann, “Abjection,” 242). In other words, despite the controversy surrounding the theme of lesbianism in Bemberg’s film, Sor Juana is not implicated in this transgressive desire.

Unlike Bemberg—whose cinematic characterization of Sor Juana’s desire remains ambiguous—when director Javier Aguirre attempted in 1986 to make a more historically accurate film about Catalina de Erauso (in contrast to the 1944 Mexican film *La monja alférez*, starring María Félix as a heterosexualized version of the Lieutenant Nun), the Basque filmmaker placed Erauso’s lesbian desire at the forefront. Although Aguirre incorporates hypothetical romantic relationships between the protagonist and two other nuns (as well as other women fooled by the male disguise), his post-Franco vision of Erauso’s life follows the spirit of most early modern interpretations of her identity and desire. As in Aguirre’s film, seventeenth-century accounts privilege Erauso’s sex-at-birth, portraying her as a woman (living as a man)

who loves women, and denying her any lasting romantic relationships. In fact, both Aguirre's film and a 1653 news pamphlet end tragically in terms of Erauso's love life, since the protagonist has won her lifelong battle to live as a man but remains defeated by the loss of her beloved. As an exercise in conjecture, Aguirre's film could have allowed a happily-ever-after ending with Erauso "getting the girl" (such as in "Catalina," the film-within-the-film in Sheila McLaughlin's 1987 lesbian film *She Must Be Seeing Things*, and in Odalys Nanin's 2008 lesbian play *The Adventures of the Lieutenant Nun*). Given that Erauso lived as a man most of his or her life and purportedly made permanent alterations to her secondary sex characteristics (by eliminating her breasts), surely a twenty-first-century film version would cast as Erauso a transgender heterosexual man.

Not unlike the curtains in Figure 4, drawn back to allow light through the windows of the dildo shop, this study has sought to shed some light on the complex topic of lesbian desire in early modern Spain. As we take one last look at the scene, however, we wonder whether the curtains are not actually in the foreground, pulled back to reveal a secret room for female clients with "special" desires—those women whose sexual activities and fantasies may not include men. Of course, these clandestine shoppers perusing the hidden merchandise are not so "secret," since the curtains frame the very public stage on which these women reveal their erotic preferences.

NOTES

Except where otherwise noted, the translations of texts originally published in Spanish are mine. In some cases I have modernized spelling and punctuation for readability.

CHAPTER I

1. For discussion of the acts paradigm, see Halperin, 24–47, 167; Sedgwick, 46–48; and Borris, *Sciences*, 4.
2. In her discussion of the “bickering over terminology,” Emma Donoghue concludes, “Both extremes seem to me to verge on silliness (‘Joan of Arc was a dyke’ vs. ‘lesbianism was invented in the late nineteenth century’)” (*Inseparable*, 203).
3. In response to other scholars’ focus on self-awareness as a determining factor for premodern identity, Robinson argues that early modern homosexual writers and readers did “conceive of themselves as characterized at least in part by an enduring sexual or romantic attraction to members of their own sex . . . I see no reason why some women who loved and desired women and some men who loved and desired men could not have had the sort of less-developed identities or self-concepts I’ve just described” (8–9).
4. Sappho, who was significant in literary discourses in early modern England, also became “the most prominent exemplar of erotic behaviors between women in the nonliterary discourses and texts through which her erotic reputation was also circulated” (Andreadis, 39).
5. In recent years, many scholars have investigated lesbian sexuality in early modern Europe. The most notable of these studies to date are Valerie Traub’s *The Renaissance of Lesbianism in Early Modern England*, Judith C. Brown’s *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy*, Denise A. Walen’s *Constructions of Female Homoeroticism in Early Modern Drama*, Harriette Andreadis’s *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550–1714*, Emma Donoghue’s *Inseparable: Desire between Women in Literature*, and Mary-Michelle DeCoste’s *Hopeless Love: Boiardo, Ariosto, and Narratives of Queer Female Desire*. There has also been an impressive groundswell of essays related to homosexuality in Spain and Latin America published in anthologies such as *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Early Modern Spain* (edited by María José Delgado and Alain Saint-Saens); *Hispanisms and*

- Homosexualities* (edited by Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin); *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American, and Spanish Culture* (edited by Susana Chávez-Silverman and Librada Hernández); *Queer Iberia: Sexualities, Cultures, and Crossings from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance* (edited by Josiah Blackmore and Gregory S. Hucheson); *¿Entiendes? Queer Readings, Hispanic Writings* (edited by Emilie L. Bergmann and Paul Julian Smith); *Spanish Writers on Gay and Lesbian Themes* (edited by David William Foster); and *Tortilleras: Hispanic and U.S. Latina Lesbian Expression* (edited by Lourdes Torres and Inmaculada Pertusa). The overwhelming majority of essays in these volumes on Hispanic homoeroticism are not focused on lesbians in the early modern period (even *Lesbianism and Homosexuality in Early Modern Spain* features more essays on male homoeroticism than desire between women). While these studies provide stimulating and challenging material related to non-traditional desire, no study to date has focused exclusively on the representation of same-sex desire between women in early modern Spain and its empire.
6. The third of the three most important canonical women writers in Spain's early modern empire is Saint Teresa of Avila—also known as Saint Teresa of Jesus—who wrote extensively on the possibilities of dangerous erotic liaisons in the convent.
 7. *Tribade*, *fricatrice*, and *rubster* refer to women who derive sexual pleasure from rubbing their genitals against other women. *Tribade* was also used generally to describe women who engage in sexual relations with other women, and more specifically to a woman who penetrated another with a dildo or an extraordinarily large clitoris.
 8. Plays containing allusions to Queen Christina include Calderón's *Afectos de odio y amor* (1658) and *La protestación de la fe* (1656), and Francisco Bances Candamos's *¿Quién es quien premia al Amor?* (1686–1687).

CHAPTER 2

1. See Crompton, "Myth," and Brown, *Immodest*, 6.
2. See also Crompton, "Myth," 15.
3. For the Spanish text, see *Nueva recopilación*, 428. See also Kamen, 207.
4. See *Nueva recopilación*, 428. See also Bennassar, 299.
5. "Las mugeres que cometen tal delito deben ser arrojadas al fuego, según la Pragmática de los Reyes Católicos" (329). See also Crompton, "Myth," 18.
6. "La unión de dos mugeres segun el cit. autor, no es posible que resulte polución, apareciendo tan solo el desorden de su apetito, y el afan con que se entregan a la liviandad. . . . Según esto pues como en las penas siempre debe acogerse la interpretación mas benigna, tal vez no debiera imponerse a las mugeres la de fuego sino otra arbitraria menor que la capital" (López, 330). See also Crompton, "Myth," 18.
7. "Pues aunque no haya señalada pena especial contra las mugeres que cometiesen el delito sobredicho sin embargo deben ser castigadas con pena estraordinaria por estremada deshonestidad" (López, 330). See also Tomás y Valiente, 46.

8. The text concludes by citing “Ishaq ibn Hunain” as the transcriber of the document (218). Given the importance of Hunayn ibn Ishaq, especially for having translated 129 of Galen’s works into Arabic, it is not surprising that the text whose material is attributed to Galen acknowledges the ninth-century Syrian scholar. As Levey and Souryal note, “There seems to be little doubt that Arabic writers of the classical period took their material on the subject of sex, directly or indirectly, from this work of Galen or pseudo-Galen. Maimonides, of the twelfth century, wrote a book on intercourse; many of the prescriptions bear a strong resemblance to the treatise discussed above” (218).
9. Vicens produced the first published Castilian translation of *Speculum al joder* in 1978 (Solomon, xix).
10. “Has de saber también que algunas mujeres sienten el talento tan fuerte que no pueden ajustarse con los hombres; por eso algunas de éstas usan un ‘gedoma,’ hecho de cuero suave con algodón en el interior y en forma de pene: se lo meten en el coño hasta que quedan satisfechas” (Vicens, 54).
11. Interestingly, Borris also notes that recent research reveals surprising similarities with early modern chiromancy: “Lesbians, [researchers] find, tend to have a hyper-androgenized finger pattern in which the index finger is proportionally shorter than the fourth, and so do homosexual males who have an exceptionally high number of older brothers” (“Sodomizing,” 143).
12. Perhaps a better translation of the title is suggested by Crompton: *A Study of Intellectual Aptitude for Learning* (*Homosexuality*, 303).
13. Conversely, Lochrie argues that “the evidence from medieval medical texts suggests that the Middle Ages was not as confused about the role of the clitoris in female pleasure as has been maintained . . . [and] that it linked the hypertrophied clitoris with deranged female homoerotic desire” long before the Renaissance (75). See also Mathes.
14. Born in Portugal, Castro studied medicine at Salamanca. He later relocated to Hamburg to avoid problems with the Inquisition arising from his Jewish heritage and practices.
15. See also Brooten, 4n5.
16. “Y que se hayan vuelto mujeres en hombres después de nacidas, y no se espanta el vulgo de oírlo; porque fuera de lo que cuentan por verdad muchos antiguos, es cosa que ha acontecido en España muy pocos años ha” (Huarte de San Juan, 609).
17. “Hubo otra mujer que, después de haber estado casado y parido un hijo, se convirtió en hombre, y se casó otra vez con otra mujer y tuvo hijos de ella” (Torquemada, 188).
18. “Esta doncella, viniendo a la edad en que le había de bajar su costumbre, en lugar de ella le nació, o salió de dentro si estaba escondido, el miembro viril, y así, de hembra se convirtió en varón, y le vistieron luego en hábito de hombre” (ibid., 189).
19. “Y como esta mujer no tuviese hijos, el marido y ella estaban mal avenidos, y así le daba tan áspera vida, fuese de celos o por otra causa que la mujer, una noche,

- hurtando los vestidos de un mozo que en casa estaba, vestida con ellos, se fue y anduvo por algunas partes fingiendo ser hombre, y así, vivió y ganaba para sustentarse; y estando así, o que la naturaleza obrase en ella con tal pujante virtud que bastase para ello, o que la imaginación intensa de verse en el hábito de hombre tuviese tanto poder que viniese a hacer el efecto, ella se convirtió en varón y se casó con otra mujer" (ibid., 190).
20. "Por ser cerrada, y no ser para casada" (Ettinghausen, *Noticias*, n.p.). Other versions of Muñoz's story refer to her as "Magdalena Muñoz." See Garza, 56–57, and Vollendorf, *Lives*, 11–12. See also Uhagón.
 21. "En muchas ocasiones vieron las monjas no ser hombre, porque unas vezes cogiendola dormida, otras por via de trisca la descubrian para satisfacerse, porque sus fuerzas, y animo, y las propiedades, y condiciones eran de varón" (Ettinghausen, *Noticias*).
 22. "Confesó que jamás le había venido su mes, y porque las monjas no le llamasen marimacho, que cuando se disciplinava hacía ostentación de la sangre en las camisas, diciendo estaba con su regla" (ibid.).
 23. "Miramos los pechos, y con ser de treinta y cuatro años, no los tenía más que una tabla. En seis o siete días que le había salido el sexo de hombre, le comenzaba a negrear el bozo y se le mudó la voz muy gruesa" (ibid.).
 24. For the Spanish text, see Ettinghausen, *Noticias*, n.p. See also Garza Carvajal, *Butterflies*, 56–57.
 25. Gowing describes the tendency in travel literature, medical treatises, and pornographic texts to displace female homoeroticism outside the bounds of European society: "Authorities often attributed the extended clitoris to foreign climates and to the heated blood of Africa and Asia. . . . One of the most widely circulated stories in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries came from Leo Africanus's *Historical Description of Africa* (1526). . . . In Egypt, other texts claimed, women's genitals grew so long that they had to be circumcised" (128).
 26. "224. ¿Has pecado contra mujer como tú? 225. ¿Con cuántas mujeres? ¿Cuántas veces? 226. Cuando hacías ese abominable pecado, ¿tenías tu pensamiento en hombres casados? Solteros? Clérigos? Religiosos? Parientes tuyos? Y de tu marido? . . . 235. ¿Has tocado con tus manos tus verguenzas? O entrando los dedos en ellas ¿has venido en polución? Cuando esto hacías, ¿pensabas en varón? En cuantos varones pensabas? Y qué estado tenían?" (Pérez Bocanegra, 230–31). See also Stavig, 144.

CHAPTER 3

1. For the Catalan text, see Biblioteca de Catalunya, MS 458.
2. For the Catalan text, see *Llibre de memòries*, 721. See also Solomon, 109n90, and Dangler, "Transgendered," 74.
3. Segura Graiño's references to the case against Catalina de Belunçe are derived from the original manuscript (*Pleito incoado por Miguel Ochoa de Olazábal, alcalde de San Sebastián, contra Catalina de Belunçe, a quien acusa de haber mantenido relaciones sexuales con Mariche de Oyarzún, vecinas ambas de San Se-*

- bastián*. 1503. Archivo de la Real Chancillería de Valladolid, Sección de Reales Ejecutorias, c. 181, exp. 39). See also Garza, 55 and 226nn82–84.
4. “La prendiesen e presa la atasen las manos con una cuerda e la pusyesen una sogá de teranco al pescueço e desnuda fasta la cintura la traxiesen públicamente por la dicha vylla y asy trayda con pregón público e competente para en tal delito la pusyesen colgada pies arriba en una hora pública y la dexasen estar ende publicamente fasta que muryese asy colgada pies arriba naturalmente fasta tanto que ovyesen mandamiento de juez competente no la abaxasen y dexasen estar para en exemplo, terror y castygo de los que lo ovyesen.” (Segura Graiño, 142–43).
 5. For discussion of how individual reputation and social esteem played vital roles in lawsuits against sodomites in Castile, see Solórzano Telechea.
 6. “Hemos tenido información que en cierto pueblo tenían unas mujeres parte con otras desta manera que la una *agebat partem viri y la otra mulieris et sine instr[ument]o aliquo la agente’ mittebat semen y la pasciente’recupiebat et emittebat semen ac si cum viro ageret*. Es la duda si en las palabras del breve se comprehende esta manera de sodomía y sobre esto hemos tenido algunos consejos de muchos juristas y teólogos y ha habido diversos pareceres. Unos dicen que se comprehendía y otros que no somos jueces ni este caso esta comprehendido debajo de aquellas palabras” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 962, 8v). I thank Tom Habinek for his assistance with this passage.
 7. AHN: Inquisición, libro 1234, 454v. See also Monter, 281–82.
 8. “Respondió el Consejo Supremo que no se conociesen una causas de mujeres que sin instrumento tenía dicho vicio un con otra” (BN: MS 848, 77r).
 9. AHN: Inquisición, libro 995, 405r–v; 482r–485v (case #22–23). See also Monter, 316–17.
 10. “Metía las manos por debajo de las faldas con tocamientos en la natura de Mariana y que entre las dos se pedían celos y sobre ellos juraba por vida de Dios y otros juramentos y que si la una no comía la otra dejaba de comer y se andaban la una atras la otra” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 995, 482r).
 11. “Ella se lo hacía a las más linda dama de Zaragoza y que la daba por cada vez una dobla y que si Mariana no se lo pagaba no se lo haría dicelo un testigo y que se jactó en otra ocasión de que se lo haría por una dobla cada vez a la mas linda dama de Zaragoza dicelo un testigo” (ibid., 482r–v).
 12. “En diferentes ocasiones y en diferentes casas y durmiendo la rea con Mariana las oyeron alentar y decirse palabras deshonestas como hombre y una mujer que tiene acto carnal por dos otras veces cada noche y por espacio de dos meses y que tenían un colchon en que dormían muchos señales de efusión de semen siendo nuevo quando empezaron a dormir en el. Un día las vieron a cosa de las nueve de el día en la cama y a cosa de ocho pasos abierta la ventana estar la Ana sobre Mariana haciendo meneos y que decía Mariana ‘si no me das no puedo ya esperar más’” (ibid., 482v).
 13. “Las ha visto por un agujero del tamaño de un real de a cuatro y que tenían abierta la ventana y Mariana se echó en la cama y Ana entre sus piernas encima

- de ella y estuvieron haciendo meneos y besándose y diciendo palabras deshonestas como cuando se conocen un hombre y una mujer por espacio de más de media hora y que luego se levantaron y se dijo la una a la otra que habían tenido efusión de semen" (ibid., 482v).
14. "Abrazándose y besándose las dos y dejándole esta meter las manos y tocar su natura con fricaciones hasta tener efusión de semen" (ibid., 483v).
 15. AGS. See also Monter, 316, and Garza, 55. I thank William Monter for his comments and suggestions regarding this case.
 16. "Cosa pública en el barrio donde las susodichas han vivido y otras personas que las conocen que la afición y amor que las susodichas se tienen procede y es por razon de que tratan la una a la otra carnalmente que usando de una invención a modo de una natura de hecho de caña y subiendose la una encima de la otra para lo meter y hacer el dicho pecado y delito de que sabe hay mucho escandalo" (AGS, 4v–5r).
 17. "En el barrio a donde las susodichas viven entre todas las personas que las conocen de que la una a la otra se tratan carnalmente como un hombre y mujer usando de un instrumento de caña de forma de natura de hombre por lo qual las llamaban por mal nombre las cañitas; y esto como dicho tiene el público notorio entre todas las personas que las conocen" (ibid., 4v).
 18. "Mujeres que decían se trataban deshonestamente la una a la otra con un baldrés que cuando las azotaron llevaban al cuello" (ibid., 33r).
 19. "Estaban conociendo la una a la otra carnalmente y así se puso a escuchar con mucha atención lo que había oído y entendió realmente que estaba la una encima de la otra que . . . la Catalina estaba debajo de la Inés encima de ella y oyó que estaban jadeando y hacezando y saliendo como aliento aj, aj, aj, como que estaban cansadas y en aquel acto de conocerse carnalmente la una a la otra por donde estaban claramente entendió que estaban en el dicho acto" (ibid., 5r).
 20. "Las oyó muchas noches como se besaban y abrazaban y se decían algunos requiebros tentándose con las manos desde la frente por la boca y pechos hasta las partes bajas preguntando la una a la otra cuando le tocaba con la mano '¿está bueno esto?' y respondía la otra que sí" (ibid., 34v–35r).
 21. "Diciendo la dicha Catalina a esta confesante 'mi alma,' 'mi vida,' 'quieres joder,' y con esto esta confesante se subía y subió encima de la dicha Catalina como hombre abriendo a la susodicha su natura y verguenzas y esta confesante las subía y pegando la una con la otra hasta que descargaba esta confesante la simiente dentro de la natura de Catalina" (ibid., 8r).
 22. "Confiesa que desde tres años a esta parte esta confessante y Inés de Santa Cruz han tratado carnalmente la una con la otra como hombre y mujer poniéndose esta confessante debajo de la Inés de Santa Cruz y la Inés de Santa Cruz encima de esta confesante y la Inés de Santa Cruz la simiesse en la natura de esta confesante estando besándose, abrazando y diciéndose palabras amorosas como hombre y mujer y que esto había sido en todas las veces treinta beces poco mas o menos pero que despues que las desterraron no han tenido acceso carnal" (ibid., 7v).

23. “Encima de ella apretándose una con otra sus verguenzas como si fuera un hombre con una mujer y acabo de rato se hallaba esta confesante mojada sus partes verguenzas, no sabe si era de orines o otra cosa que hubiese echado la dicha Inés” (ibid., 20v).
24. “La ha dicho muchas veces que para qué quería tratar con hombres que ella no los podía ver porque las mujeres se hacían preñadas teniendo acceso con ellos. Y afrentaban su linaje y que teniéndolo una mujer con otra se holgaban y no se hacían preñadas . . . que después que había tenido acceso con María de la Paz vecina de Madrid tres o cuatro veces no podía ver a hombres ni tener acceso con ellos porque le hacían asco” (19v–20r).
25. “María de la Paz y otras fueron castigadas por los dichos malos tratos y que decían que les habían usado un instrumento de cuero o baldrés con que se trababan” (ibid., 20r).
26. “Preguntada si es verdad que esta confesante ha estado de los dichos catorce meses a esta parte después que dice vino a esta ciudad en compañía de la Inés comiendo juntas a una mesa y durmiendo en una cama. Dixo que habiendo venido a esta confesante a esta ciudad ha sido perseguida de la dicha Inés para que viviese con ella y tuviese su trato y amistad y que viviese con ella donde ella la pusiese que ella la daría todo lo que hubiese menester—esta confesante siempre andaba huyendo de ella procurando defenderse no queriendo tener su amistad y aun que esta confesante ha sentado a servir en algunas casas acudía luego de ellas la dicha Inés y decía que no la tuviesen allí porque era una puta y estaba amancebada y trataban con hombres y si algunos alaban a esta confesante si iba a ellos y les rogaba y persuadía que no tratasen con esta confesante y otras veces los reñía como si fuera hombre como ellos y les haría fieros y amenazas diciendo que los había de hacer castigar por Justicia . . . y viendo que esta confesante no quería tratar con ella deshonestamente la tomó sus vestidos. . . . La mesaba de los cabellos y la daba puñadas y la hacía otros malos tratamientos porque no quería salir ni estar donde ella la pusiese por su mano y otra vez la descalabró dándole heridas en la cabeza de las quijadas que le dio en una pared y la dejaba arañada y andaba siempre acardenalada de los malos tratamientos que le daría” (ibid., 16v–17v).
27. “Para qué se amancebaba con un hombre casado que le quitaba el sustento a su mujer e hijos, que mejor era estar con ella pues que la tenía en su casa como mujer honrada y la vestía y calzaba y daba de comer y todo lo que había menester” (ibid., 4v).
28. “Que la tenía perdida muchos años había que no hacía vida con su marido por amor de ella; y que la había comido su hacienda y que por amor de ella la habían azotado” (ibid., 4v).
29. “Y con esta pendencia también riñieron sobre un pañuelo que la dicha Inés la había tomado y porque esta confesante se le pidió la dijo ‘puta es de vuestro galán’ y allí la volvió a deshonrar diciendo que trataba con hombres y esta amancebada” (ibid., 18v).
30. “Algunas veces reñían y otra veces estaban muy amigas” (ibid., 21v).

31. “Put a bellaca este cuchillo traigo para cruzaros la cara y os la tengo de cruzar aquí y hubo muy grande escándalo y alboroto entre la gente que estaba en la dicha iglesia por ver el atrevimiento que había tenido la dicha Inés beata” (ibid., 17v).
32. “Por la mala vecindad que había en el barrio” (ibid., 9v).
33. “Por ver las tan juntas y que nadie ha sido poderoso para apartarlas aunque han sido castigadas por ello” (ibid., 24v).
34. Garza, on the other hand, claims that Inés was sixty in 1603 and that Catalina was in her mid-thirties (55).
35. “Vino del patio de la dicha real chancillería y dio cuenta de lo que le había pasado y de la dicha persecución de la dicha Inés de la Cruz al Licenciado Parra abogado diciendo que se quería entrar a quejar ante los señores alcaldes de los malos tratamientos que le hacía la dicha Inés de la Cruz y de como no la quería dejar y el dicho Licenciado Parra le respondió que se sogasse y asentasse a servir en alguna casa honrada y así asentó en la casa de la dicha doña Juana” (AGS, 18v).
36. In her study of “homoeroticity” in New Granada between 1559 and 1822, Giraldo Botero notes that all the same-sex relationships between women documented in court records during this period can be described as “stable” or long-term (32).
37. Quoted in Giraldo Botero, 38, and Rodríguez, 105.
38. See Giraldo Botero, 56, and Rodríguez, 105.
39. All references to this case are from AHN: Inquisición, libro 860. It is also reprinted in Pérez, Muntaner, and Colom. See also Pérez Escotado, and Prohens Perelló.
40. “Meneando los labios, como que reñaba, dio tres golpes en tierra con la mano y hacía señales encima del fuego, que era una línea recta, por seis veces y después dio tres golpes con el tacón en tierra y tomando una escudilla de agua hechó un puño de sal entero en ella y encendiendo una candela y mirando el cielo por la ventana que estaba abierta decía cosas entre dientes y que no la entendían y preguntándola que era aquello que hacía respondió que las había de dar mucho remedio y pusiendo el dedo pulgar en la palma de la mano rodeándole después, hacía como que medía el brazo y volvía mediendo hasta tornar a la misma mano, y esto por tres veces y preguntandola que era aquello que decía dixo una vez que eran oraciones de judíos y otra de moros y que mirando a una estrella había dicho: *O estrella, estrella que andas por el cielo ayúdame en mis trabajos*, como quien dice: Dios ayúdame en mis trabajos y que quando pasava algún mosquito por delante della decía que presto tendría buenas nuevas y remedio de lo que pretendían y encendiendo ciertos carbones decía que así se encendiesen los corazones de ciertas mugeres que ella amaba con las quales tractaba deshonestamente” (AHN: Inquisición 860, 248v–49r).
41. See Sánchez Ortega, *Inquisición*, and Seligmann, 266–67.
42. For astrology and necromancy in Islamic, Christian, and Jewish traditions, see Kieckhefer, 165.

43. “Y que había dicho que si venían moros se daría a ellos y que los diablos no eran tan malos como los pintaban y que lo había porfiado” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 860, 249r). See also Valbuena, 208–10.
44. “Meneando los labios, como que reñaba, . . . mirando a una estrella había dicho: *O estrella, estrella que andas por el cielo ayúdame en mis trabajos*, como quien dice: Dios ayúdame en mis trabajos. . . . Y que mirando las estrellas había dicho a una estrella: *o estrella, estrella que andas por el cielo ayúdame en mis trabajos*, como quien dice a Dios ayúdame en mis trabajos” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 860, 248v–249r).
45. “When at the beginning of the 1570s a group of Judaists was discovered in Naples, the Grand Inquisitor, the Cardinal of Pisa, recommended that the trial should not take place in Naples for fear of the unrest which could result” (Hroch and Skybová, 100).
46. “Y que tractando del mal regimiento que tenían en la dicha casa había dicho que aún las harían que no creyesen en Dios . . . había dicho quel diablo la había traído aquella casa para hacerla más pecar y que la ayudaría en lo demás” (AHN: Inquisición, libro 860, 249v).
47. “Calificase haber proferido palabras heréticas, apostáticas e idolátricas y blasphemias hereticales e pertenecientes a invocación de demonios y sospechosa de heregía, escandalosas, malsonantes y que ofenden las pias orejas” (ibid., 251v).
48. “Que había tractado deshonestamente con otras hermanas” (ibid., 251v).
49. “Y queriendo una hermana cerrar una ventana ella la dixo que no la cerrase, que había de aguardar una estrella y había pedido unas candeletas a otra hermana para hacer la oración de las candeletas que prohíbe el Sancto Oficio y que había persuadido a otra hermana que se encomendase al diablo, quel la ayudaría y que se burlaba de las otras hermanas que frecuentaban los sacramentos y oración, llamándolas sanctas embarniçadas” (ibid., 251r–v).
50. “Todas estas mujeres reclaman con fuerza la libertad de amar a quien quieran y de pensar lo que quieran. Unas esperan ser liberadas del encierro o que llegue quien las salve, y otras, las que más han viajado, organizan sexualmente su encierro con otras compañeras. Textualmente repiten que el encierro y el régimen de la casa era quererlas hacer cristianas por la fuerza” (Pérez Escobedo, 132).
51. The title of Magdalena de San Jerónimo’s proposal was *Razón y forma de la Galera y Casa Real, que el rey nuestro señor manda hazer en estos Reynos para castigo de las mugeres vagantes, y ladronas, alcahuetas y otras semejantes* (Information and Plan for a Royal Prison and Correctional Home for Women, which Our Lord the King Requested for His Kingdoms to Punish Vagrant and Thieving Women, Procuresses, and the Like).
52. “Llegada la noche, salen como bestias fieras de sus cuevas a buscar la caza” (Magdalena de San Jerónimo, 71).
53. “Conviene también que de noche duerman algunas de las más inquietas con alguna cadena o en el cepo, como se hace en algunas galeras con algunos forzados, porque no estarán pensando sino por donde irse o como podrán aporrear a las oficiales o mesarse unas a otras y hacerse todo cuanto mal

- podieren. Yo las conozco bien, que las he tratado muchos años, que como el demonio está tan enseñoreado de ellas y tan airado por haberle sacado estas almas de sus uñas, las estará induciendo a muchos males, y hasta que el castigo las domestique estarán furiosas" (ibid., 85–86).
54. While Madre Magdalena bases her proposal for a women's prison on her years of experience running a convent for reformed prostitutes in Valladolid, a mid-seventeenth-century one-act comedy titled *Entremés de las mozas de la galera* (The Interlude of the Girls in Prison) likewise makes a link between sexual promiscuity and female prisoners. As the interlude dramatizes some of the realities for the female inmates (such as having their eyebrows shaved and their hair cropped short), the humor is predominantly created from puns playing on heterosexual desire and crimes of thievery. See Pérez Baltasar.
 55. "Y habiendo muchas mujeres queriendo más ser hombres que lo que naturaleza les dió, se han castigado muchas que en la cárcel se han hecho gallos con un valdrés hecho en forma de natura de hombre, que atado con sus cintas se lo ponían; y han llevado por esto doscientos azotes" (Chaves, 25–26).
 56. "Prenden a cuantas mujeres andan baldías por el lugar, llevándolas de diez en diez, y de veinte en veinte, maniatadas a la cárcel. La galera está de bote en bote, que no caben ya de pies; y si este rigor pasa adelante, será menester darle a la Casa muchos ensanches, y aun tener mucha leña de repuesto, por los que habrán de quemar, faltándoles este socorro" (Barrionuevo, 253).
 57. "En lo temporal se reduce toda su conveniencia aun mal jergón y una manta, y por cama el suelo, durmiendo dos y tres juntas. . . . Considere Vuestra Majestad setenta o ochenta mujeres encerradas en estas dos cárceles que por sus vicios o su naturaleza (que de esta calidad son las más) son la hez de la República, criadas en una total libertad, sin enseñanza alguna, habituadas a una vida licenciosa, discurriendo libres por calles. . . . Puede creerse que de este desorden sólo se originan hurtos, reniegos, maldiciones, odios, testimonios falsos unas con otras, conversaciones y actos deshonestos, siendo una Sodoma de torpeza (en que no pocas veces se les ha encontrado) que hacen de la Galera una viva imagen del infierno" (quoted in Domínguez Ortiz, 282–83).
 58. "Entra notada sólo de un delito sale instruida de otros muchos" (ibid., 283).
 59. As Gowing notes in her study of lesbians in early modern Europe, brothels might have been one space for "lesbian connections," but female prisons certainly provided opportunities for same-sex activity. Gowing cites the case of Geneviève Pommier who, after serving time in a women's jail, was befriended by a woman who had fallen madly in love with her. The new friend was surprised that Geneviève had not "learnt in the prison what 'a good friend' was, or about the friendly favours they gave each other"—both of which she demonstrated with kisses, tender caresses, and 'brisk and violent movements'" (140).
 60. "Por ningún acontecimiento se permita que duerman dos juntas . . . castigándose severamente la contravención" (*Regla y constituciones para las hermanas*, 17r). See also Pérez Baltasar, 60.

61. “No puedan dormir dos religiosas en una cama juntas por ningun caso que sea” (quoted in Carracedo Falagán, 284).
62. Margaret of Austria may have been the aunt of the Spanish Emperor Charles V, but was most likely Margaret of Parma, the illegitimate daughter of Charles V and stepsister to King Philip II, under whom she served as regent of the Netherlands from 1559–1567. See Jacqueline Murray, “Agnolo,” 209; Eisenbichler, 282. Regarding Firenzuola, Jacqueline Murray observes, “It is clear that he expects that his audience will be familiar with their attachments and so not shocked by his assertions” (“Agnolo,” 209).
63. While Eisenbichler speculates that this Cecilia could be based on an actual person or even a “composite of various Roman prostitutes and courtesans,” he also suggests that the mention of the same-sex activities of a famous prostitute may not have been more than a “male fantasy akin to lesbian pornography for consumption by heterosexual males” (281).
64. See Eisenbichler for a complete discussion of the poetry, letters, and other texts related to the Laudomia and Margaret love affair. Despite its seventeenth-century publication, *Lives of Gallant Ladies* was begun some time before 1584. In this work, Brantôme identifies Margarita as “aunt to the Emperor Charles” (Castle, 169).
65. Isabella de Luna was a famous courtesan (Allinson, 510n121).
66. Borris refers to Brantôme’s *Lives* as “a gossipy collection of anecdotes on amorous themes told from an avidly heterocentric male standpoint” (298).
67. “Ellas son escuelas desta nefanda maldad y sus rameras maestras deste torpe vicio” (Maqueda, 19v). “Vienen a encenderse en deseos nefarios, y a tener torpezas unos con otros” (20v). For discussion of Jaume Roig’s mid-fifteenth-century *Spill*, which accuses women of inventing the sin of sodomy, see Archer, 118.
68. “No solo entre si, por ser tan viciosas, suelen pecar unas con otras torpísimamente, lo qual es pecado de sodomía, como sienten con Santo Thomas todos los Theologos” (Maqueda, 20).
69. “San Juan Crisóstomo . . . llama a estas casas públicas oficinas del Diablo, y cuevas de vívoras, aspides, y dragones, para dar a entender que en ellas se hallan y enseñan todas las ponçoñas de las almas, que son los pecados . . . que de aí nace la hechizería, porque las rameras por la mayor parte son hechizeras y embusteras” (ibid., 27).
70. Describing the bawd in early modern drama as an icon of illicit and excessive sexuality, Denise A. Walen notes that this figure (while imitating the male role in heterosexual coupling) represents a negative image of homoerotic desire: “As the mediator in the sexual commodification of women, the bawd must see and relate to prostitutes as men would, which involves her in highly sexualized interactions with the various women in her charge. The bawd becomes a surrogate man. . . . *The Spanish Bawd* (1631) English translation by James Mabbe from *La Celestina* . . . includes one of the most overt depictions of female homosexual activity in early modern drama” (109).

71. Hutcheson describes act 7 as “one of the more provocative scenes” of Rojas’s text (251).
72. For the Spanish text, see Rojas, *La Celestina*, 176.
73. Rojas, *La Celestina*, 176–78.
74. *Ibid.*, 67.
75. See Weber, “*Celestina*,” 134, and Hutcheson.
76. “Ignoramos lo que hacían la Alcahueta y Alisa juntas por la ‘noche’” (Cantalepiedra Erostate, 60).
77. For the Spanish text, see Delicado, *La Lozana*, 73.
78. *Ibid.*
79. Bullough attributes the sexual charges against heretics and witches to an underlying hostility to nonprocreative sex. Russell likewise demonstrates how the ideas of the heretical sexual orgy were introduced in medieval Europe in the twelfth century and the explicit allegation of homosexuality became commonplace in trials, with variations on the phrases *vir cum viris* (man with man) and *femina cum feminis* (woman with woman) appearing again and again throughout the Middle Ages (95).
80. Those who willfully challenge the natural order might also include women who “seemed self-sufficient or overly fond of each other” and could therefore be negatively identified as being involved in a bewitched relationship (Simons, 88). Roper describes the 1541 case of Catharina Ziegler, believed to be a prostitute, and her close relationship with Ursula Lemplin (a suspected procuress), which was blamed on the evil influence of love magic. The way in which their illicit friendship is processed by officials and family members demonstrates the belief that young prostitutes are corrupted by evil, bewitching procuresses, and that the “unnatural love between women . . . may appear in submerged form in the accusations made against the procuress” (257). See Roper, *Holy*, 257–58, and “Mothers” (especially 12–14 and 17).
81. See also Traub, 201.
82. “De más de cincuenta años de edad, de estado casada que no quiere hacer vida con su marido” (*Ana Rodríguez*, 114); “por ilusa, afectadora de santos, falsos milagros y revelaciones divinas” (21).
83. “Me encerraban, y se ponían a enseñarme de bulto sobre el sexto mandamiento con acciones de manos sobre sus ropas, haciendo lo que un hombre podía, y me daban besos tal cual ocasión. . . . Tenían sarpullido en partes ocultas, y con esto hacían que yo las tentase (la Aramburu aun se descubría) y me daban a entender que con la mano les hiciera lo que me habían enseñado; y esto fue la Colina por tres ocasiones, y la Aramburu infinitas” (*ibid.*, 148).
84. “Llegué a no creer el sexto mandamiento y nos mezclábamos las tres, ya haciendo veces de hombre, y de mujer y aún ayudándonos con las manos” (*ibid.*, 162).
85. “El demonio me besaba aun en partes ocultas y yo también a él, dejándolo cohabitar conmigo por la boca” (*ibid.*, 165).

CHAPTER 4

1. See Vallbona for reproductions of the autobiography, broadsides, and supporting documents. See also Velasco, *Lieutenant Nun*, for a complete discussion of desire in these seventeenth-century texts (and their subsequent revisions and adaptations).
2. See Julie Greer Johnson, 146, and McKendrick, 125. Fraker suggests that a male actor would be more appropriate for the role of the Lieutenant Nun: "In a movie based on her life, the leading role could be played by Dennis Hopper or Nicholas Cage" (40). For more on Luisa de Robles as the Lieutenant Nun, see Velasco, "La Primera."
3. Merrim observes, "Although much emphasis is placed on Erauso's virginity when she discloses her sex, the implications of homosexual attraction add yet another layer of ambiguous titillation to the text as it eroticizes the many, even apparently innocent, encounters with other females" (182).
4. "¿Pude yo (siendo quien soy) / darte señales más claras / de mi amor?" (Pérez de Montalbán, 72).
5. "Esta cadena recibo / mas que por sus eslabones / manifiesten las prisiones / en que enamorado vivo" (ibid., 75).
6. "Pero no he de declararme / aunque me cueste la vida" (ibid., 101).
7. "Vuelve, vuelve, Catalina" (ibid., 103).
8. "Que yo soy a quien hurtasteis / la ocasión, yo quien estaba / en la calle, y aguardaba / la Gloria que vos gozasteis . . . pues que yo en su pensamiento / alcancé sólo el intento, pero vos la ejecución" (ibid., 123–24).
9. "Y si adoráis / a doña Ana, ¿he de creer, / que amáis siendo mujer, / otra mujer? No queráis / acreditar imposibles" (ibid., 126).
10. "Escucha, señora, / pues que tu agradecimiento, / y tu honor pudieron tanto / en mi pecho, que me hicieron, / sólo porque su sospecha / satisfaciese don Diego, / descubrir, que era mujer, / cuando estaba tan secreto . . . pues decí, / que soy mujer, es lo mismo, / que confesar que no pude / agraviaros, ni ofenderos" (ibid., 170–71).
11. "Con aquesto, y pidiendo / perdón, tenga fin aquí / este caso verdadero, / donde llega la comedia / han llegado los sucesos; / que hoy está el Alférez Monja / en Roma, y si casos nuevos / dieren materia a la pluma, / segunda parte os prometo. Fin" (ibid., 172).
12. Vallbona, 51.
13. Ibid., 112.
14. Ibid.
15. "No tiene pechos: que desde mui muchacha me dixo haver hecho no sé qué remedio para secarlos i quedar llanos, como le quedaron: el qual fue un emplasto que le dio un Ytaliano, que quando se lo puso le causó gran dolor; pero después, sin hacerle otro mal, ni mal tratamiento, surtió el efecto" (quoted in Vallbona, 128).

16. "Cuando esta parió . . . le salió una cabeza como medio dedo pugar, que así lo señaló, que parecía en su hechura cabeza de miembro de hombre" (quoted in Maganto Pavón).
17. See Kagan and Dyer, 44–45, and Velasco, "Interracial."
18. "With a stiff and smooth instrument she committed the unspeakable crime of sodomy" (translation quoted in Burshatin, "Written," 423–24).
19. "Algún arte tan sutil que bastó para engañar a éste así en la bista como en el tacto" (quoted in Burshatin, "Written," 433).
20. "Porque yo con pacto expreso ni tázito del demonio nunca me fingí hombre para casarme con muger como se me pretende imputar. E lo que pasa es que como en este mundo muchas vezes se han visto personas que son andróginos, que por otro nombre se llaman hermafroditos, que tienen entramos sexos, yo también [h]e sido uno de éstos. Y al tienpo que me pretendí casar incalecía e prevalessía más en el sexo masculino, e naturalmente era hombre e tenía todo lo neçesario de hombre para poder casar. Y de que lo era hiçe información e probanza ocular de médicos e zirujanos peritos en el arte, los quales me vieron e tentaron e testificaron con juramento que era tal hombre y me podía casar con muger. Y con la dicha probanza hecha judicialmente me casé por hombre" (quoted in Burshatin, "Written," 447–48).
21. "No era hermafrodita sino mujer. . . . Aunque es verdad que pudo crecerle lo que llaman ninphe o pudendum que las nace a algunas mujeres en la matriz, pero que esta no lo tiene ni tiene señal de averla tenido" (quoted in Maganto Pavón, 41).
22. "Al tiempo del nacimiento salí cerrado de natura e sexo, de manera que no se le hechaba de ver el sexo que tenía, mas de un pequeño agujero por donde orinaba" (ibid., 19).
23. All descriptions of Muñoz in this paragraph are from Ettinghausen, *Noticias*.
24. "Algunas veces le veía las camisas manchadas de sangre y él le decía que era de una almorrana" (quoted in Maganto Pavón, 125).
25. "Le vio las tetas y es tan gorda que tiene los pechos grandes conforme al cuerpo, y pezones, los cuales tiene sino de mujer" (quoted in Maganto Pavón, 120).
26. "Y como parece que aportan por allí pocos españoles, parece que me apeteció para su hija" (Vallbona, 70).
27. Ibid.
28. Perry also notes that "here Erauso may have made an allusion to racism in the ideal of female beauty held by most Spanish men at this time. However, she did not simply leave the dark-skinned mestiza, but continued to keep her company until she could no longer delay the marriage" ("From Convent," 737).
29. "Era mi esposa negra y fea, cosa muy contraria a mi gusto, que fue siempre de buenas caras, por lo qual se puede creer que los quatro meses que estube con esta señora fueron para mí quatro siglos" (quoted in Rubio Merino, 68).
30. Referring to Erauso's possible status as a beardless *capón* (eunuch), Perry notes the predominance of race over sex categories: "The body of this soldier became sexed only in the context of power relations, which assumed that lightness of

complexion counted for more than body hair. In the New World outposts at this time the Spanish soldier had the power not only to subjugate darker-skinned peoples, but to determine the discourse used to describe this experience" ("From Convent," 402).

31. See also Stolcke, Silverblatt, and McClintock.
32. See McClintock (27) for an engaging discussion of "porno-tropics" (women as imperial boundary markers).
33. See also Vallbona, 71.
34. Céspedes had also fought loyally for Philip II against the Morisco rebels in the Alpujarras War (1568–1570).
35. Vallbona, 112
36. *Ibid.*, 113.
37. *Ibid.*, 118.
38. *Ibid.*, 123.
39. "Con aquella esclava Andaluza, llamada Elena de Céspedes, la qual dexado el hábito de muger, fingió muchos años ser hombre, mostrava serlo aunque mal tallado, y sin barba con cierto artificio engañoso, y era tan al natural que después de auerle mirado algunos cirujanos, y declarado ser hombre, se caso en Cien Poçuelos" (quoted in Huerta, 262).
40. "Ya sé que algunos y muchos han querido dudar de semejantes metamorfoseos y transmutaciones, teniéndolas por imposible, y a los casos que refieren de mujeres, que se mudaron o convirtieron en hombre, los tienen, no por fabulosos, sino por invención, y engaño de las tales mujeres, lo cual prueban de lo sucedido en Castilla con una esclava andaluza, llamada Elena de Céspedes, la cual dexado el hábito de mujer, fingió ser hombre por muchos años, y mostraba serlo, aunque sin barba, y mal tallado, con cierto engaño artificioso, y tan al natural, que después de haberle mirado algunos cirujanos, y declarado ser hombre, se casó en un lugar del Conde de Chinchón, llamado Cienpozuelos; pero por último supo el Santo Tribunal de la Inquisición la verdad del caso, y descubrió el engaño, que había; y así dicen pudo haberle del mismo modo en los demás casos" (Fuentelapeña, 244–45).
41. "Caminando con ella de su hermosura enamorada" (quoted in Vallbona, 172).
42. "Bolcanes arrojaba nuestra Peregrina por los ojos" (*ibid.*, 174).
43. "Sabida la bizarría de su despejo, se celebró mucho de los que la conocían" (*ibid.*).
44. "Falleció con una muerte ejemplar. . . Tenía todos los días por costumbre rezar lo que es de obligación, a las Religiosas professas, ayunaba toda la Quaresma y los advientos y Vigilias, hacía todas las semanas, Lunes, Miércoles y Viernes tres deciplinas, y oya todos los días missa" (quoted in Vallbona, 174–75).
45. From Brussels, she wrote, "My happiness would be second to none if I was allowed to share it with you and if you could witness it. I swear to you that I would merit the envy of the gods if I could enjoy the pleasure of seeing you. . . . I will carry with me even after death the noble passion and tenderness that I have always shown to you" (translation quoted in Masson, 230). After a triumphant

- reception in Rome, she wrote a letter in 1656 to Belle: "How happy I would be if it was permitted for me to see you, Belle, but I am condemned to the fate of loving you always, esteeming you always, but seeing you never" (translation quoted in Buckley, 187). A year later (1657), she wrote from Italy, "Now that, in the most civilized part of the world I have seen the most beautiful and the most charming member of our sex. I can claim with even greater assurance that I have seen no woman who can compete with you, for you are charming above them all. . . . But even if I must face the fact that I may never see you again, I am equally sure that I will always love you, and you are cruel if you doubt this fact. You should not doubt a friendship which has persisted through an absence of three years; and if you remember the power you have over me, you will also remember that I have been in the possession of your love for twelve years; I belong to you so utterly, that it will never be possible for you to lose me: and only when I die, shall I cease loving you" (translation quoted in Buckley, 187–88).
46. "Como si fuera hombre, y que por esto le envía el Rey estos caballos, y aun se dice que es más que mujer, no porque sea hermafrodita, sino porque no es para poder ser casada" (Barrionuevo, 58).
 47. "No tiene nada de mujer, sino el sexo. Su voz parece de hombre, como también el gesto; venía cada día a caballo . . . se está de modo que a no verla muy de cerca se dijera ser caballero muy plático. . . . El Rey nuestro Señor ha pedido su retrato a caballo. . . . Cuando está en Palacio lo trae muy vulgar, y jamás he visto cosa de oro o plata en su cabeza o garganta, si no es una sortija en un dedo. No se le da de afeitarse, una vez solamente en la semana la peina, y tal vez tarde quince días en hacerlo; los domingos gasta media hora en vestirse y otros días apenas un cuarto" (quoted in Vega, 61).
 48. "Y que por todas las ciudades donde ha pasado hace a un pintor famoso que lleva sacar luego un bosquejo. Al Rey le ha enviado su retrato: está armada, de medio cuerpo arriba, gallardísimo el talle, hermosa cara, ojos vivos y rasgados, y con tal severidad, que dice bien lo que es. Sabe el arte militar tan bien como el general más experto" (Barrionuevo, 237).
 49. "La reina de Suecia ha escrito al Rey una elegantísima carta. . . . Sólo le falta que se le antoje le haga algún hijo el Rey, que en esto de bastardos tiene muy buena mano, y en los legítimos una dicha muy corta. Dios sobre todo" (ibid., 211).
 50. "Dícese ha tomado la Casa de Austria resolución que, en caso que no quisiere dar Dios hijo varón que suceda en España, se case el del Emperador, hermano de nuestra Reina, con la infanta, y que el archiduque haga lo mismo y se case con la reina de Suecia, y se procure le elijan por Rey de los Romanos para que suceda en el Imperio. No lo afirmo. Lo cierto es que si no fuere así, por lo menos es bien pensado, porque el Emperador está perlático" (ibid., 263).
 51. On the other hand, a series of damaging news pamphlets was published in Paris during the 1660s about Queen Christina's same-sex desires. In these anonymous texts were claims that respectable mothers didn't dare allow their daughters to visit the monarch out of fear that she would make passes at the girls, having concluded that she was "one of the most ribald tribades ever heard

- of" (translation quoted in Waters, 43). Sarah Waters explains that "these slanderous texts were to influence Christina's biographers for the next three hundred years: when they weren't citing or quoting the gossip directly, they were certainly taking Christina's reputation as lesbian or sexual libertine seriously" (43).
52. "Dícese que para el mes de mayo vendrá a España. . . Ella es en todo un prodigio" (Barrionuevo, 239).
 53. "Es cierto que viene a España para mayo, y que posará junto a las Descalzas el tiempo que aquí estuviere, y que luego pasará a la Alhambra de Granada, que desea mucho ver" (ibid.). *Descalzas* (discalced) refers to religious orders whose nuns wear sandals.
 54. "Para la venida de esta reina de Suecia, que se dice será esta primavera . . . se preparan en Madrid grandes fiestas con que festejarla. . . De mi parte la he festejado con esa décima. Cada uno ofrece lo que puede, y a las veces se estima tanto la flor como el diamante" (ibid., 253).
 55. "Triunfo mayor no se ha visto; / Vino, entró, venció, triunfó" (ibid.).
 56. "Pusieron a la reina de Suecia un pasquín muy bellaco, tratándola de hipócrita, vana, loca y deshonesto con don Antonio Pimentel, su querido del alma, y otros, y se dice que un cardenal le dió una joya riquísima, que se la pusiese en su nombre, diciéndola no la podía emplear en mejor parte ni en mujer más linda; y que le respondió que enamorarse, que no lo estaba tanto como había menester. Y se dice ha mandando Su Majestad se aparten de ella los españoles que la asisten. . . Ya don Antonio Pimentel y los demás españoles que asistían a la reina de Suecia se han ido a Flandes por orden del Rey" (Barrionuevo, 277).
 57. "Dícese que cuando don Antonio Pimentel se despidió de la reina de Suecia para volverse a Flandes, irritada con él por haberle dicho ponía nota en su honestidad, le dijo las razones siguientes: 'Sois un pícaro gallina, ladrón, infame y mal caballero, y a no ser vasallo del rey de España, a quien yo estimo tanto, hiciera con vos la demostración que merecíades. No parezcáis más delante de mí, ni ocasionéis se irrite más contra vos mi justo enojo.' Con que le volvió las espaldas sin oírle respuesta ninguna, y se fue" (ibid., 295–96).
 58. "Dícese va embarazada en cuantro meses del cardenal Lomelin, mozo gallardo y de lindo talle y disposición. . . Dícese que la reina de Suecia, antes de entrar en París, abortó una noche secretamente. Es mujer. Todo puede ser" (ibid., 314).
 59. "Dícese que la reina de Suecia queda muy agrasajada del francés. Ella lo quiere ver todo. Es mujer; no me espanta" (ibid., 8).
 60. "Auto sacramental" refers to a short allegorical play dealing with the mystery of the Eucharist.
 61. "Auristela: Pues si ya tu mano es mía, ¿qué hay para que a darla esperes? / Cris-terna: Y la doy. / Auristela: Y yo la acepto. / Turín (*aparte*): Mas ¿qué fuera que se viese acabar una comedia casándose dos mujeres? / Auristela: Y supuesto que ya es mía, sin que nadie el serlo niegue, llega, Casimiro, toma esta mano. / Cris-terna: ¿A eso te atreves? / Auristela: Sí, que en tanto es mía una joya, en cuanto, si bien lo adviertes, tengo el uso della, y puedo, dársela a quien yo quisiere.

Llega, qué esperas? / Casimiro: No sé si me atreva. / Auristela: Pues ¿qué temes? / Casimiro: Corbarde llevo a tocarla. / Cristerna: No hay porque corbarde llegues; pues no es de quien te la da, sino de quien te la adquiere. Y pues que mis vanidades se dan a partido, puedes, Lesbia, borrar de aquel libro las exenciones. Estése el mundo como se estaba, y sepan que las mujeres, vasallas del hombre nacen; pues en sus afectos, siempre que el odio y amor compiten, es el amor el que vence. / Turin (*aparte*): Ahora digo, y digo bien, que son diablos las mujeres" (Calderón; emphasis mine).

CHAPTER 5

1. See also Jacqueline Murray, "Twice," 195, and Judith C. Brown, *Immodest*, 8.
2. See also Jacqueline Murray, "Twice," 196.
3. "Las celdas que son las alcobas referidas, no tengan puertas, sino unas cortinas pardas por delante, para que con mas decencia y honestidad se puedan vestir y desnudar, y estar en las camas" (*Regla y constituciones del convento*, 16).
4. "Cada Religiosa ocupe solo la suya [celda] y no se impidan los oficios de virtud, ni quebranten el silencio, estando dos o mas en una celda. . . . Ninguna Religiosa pueda entrar en la celda de otra sin licencia de la Prelada, y las que entrare se le dé una disciplina y un ayuno, y si de noche, se le aplique la pena de grave culpa; y la misma pena que tienen las que entran de día en las celdas unas de otras sin licencia, incurran las que en qualquier hora entraren en la celda de la Prelada, estando ella ausente" (*Regla y constituciones de las religiosas carmelitas*, 71 and 105r–v);
5. "Que una religiosa no entre en celda de otra, pena de comer en tierra en el refitorio, y si huviere dos en una celda, portense de suerte que no hagan ruido" (*Constituciones generales*, 68v).
6. "Una disciplina en Capítulo y comer en el suelo pan y agua" (*Constituciones propias*, 69).
7. "Es también culpa mayor si alguna cayere en algun pecado de carne y si (lo que Dios no quiera) alguna fuere convencida del pecado de la sodomía, se le (h)a de dar cárcel perpetua o será expelida de la Religión" (*Regla y constituciones de las religiosas y monjas*, 18v).
8. "Y asi encargamos sumamente a todas nuestras monjas tengan paz y amor unas con otras. . . . No permita *amistades particulares*, sino que todas se amen generalmente, y si sintiere alguna afición particular, al punto la ataje y quite, y en esto sea rigurosa, porque asi conviene, si no quiere ser destruida la paz y concordía del convento" (*Regla y constituciones del convento* 21; emphasis mine).
9. See Torres Sánchez, 98 and Weber, "Spiritual," 126.
10. For the Spanish text, see Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 678; all references to the Spanish texts for Teresa de Jesús will be from this edition unless otherwise noted.
11. For the Spanish text, see Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 682–83.
12. "La qual carezca de aficciones singulares: porque amando más en alguna par-

- ricular, no engendre escándalo en toda la comunidad" (*Regla de las sorores*, 25v). "Mire mucho [la Abadesa] por la conservación de la paz, no dando lugar a *amistades particulares*, sino que con igualdad se amen en el Señor unas a otras, y sea en esto la primera, no teniendo singularidad con ninguna" (*Constituciones propias*, 43v; emphasis mine).
13. "No permita amistades particulares. . . Y encargamos a la dicha Priora, que por la misma razón no permita que ninguna monja defienda a otra en manera alguna. . . Y a las dichas nuestras monjas exortamos en Christo guarden con particular advertencias lo sobredicho, y entiendan las deseosas de su aprovechamiento espiritual, que le hallaran en amar a todas en común, y evitar amistades particulares, y en no defender una a otra, y gozarán de toda paz interior y exterior" (*Regla y constituciones del convento*, 21r–v). See also *Constituciones propias*, 67.
 14. "Y guarde su comunidad con honesta vida, porque provocadas las hermanas por su exemplo, la obedezcan más por amor, que por temor. No tenga singulares aficiones, porque amando a la parte no engendre escandalo en el todo" (*Constituciones generales*, 32v).
 15. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 690.
 16. "Si alguno estubiere tentado con otro, sáquelo en la recreación y dé a entender a los otros sus tentaciones, para que se escandalicen, y toda la casa se perturbe" (quoted in Moriones, 498). For the Spanish text of "Since our followers . . .", see Moriones, 485.
 17. Undoubtedly, the particular friendships that can create individual and communal problems are also evident in the warnings for monks in the monastery. In the *Avisos* he drafted for the monks in Madrid in 1627, Francisco de los Angeles is more explicit about what physical contact to avoid in the monastery: "When two monks are together in the cell, they should not undress for bed in front of the other until the lamp is turned off. If he is alone he should not undress unless he is half covered with his blanket. If either of the two wishes to wash himself, the other must leave the room for a while." ["Quando estan dos juntos en una celda, no quitanse el uno el hábito delante del otro para acostarse hasta tener apagado el candil, y si está solo no se le quita hasta estar medio cubierto con la manta y si alguno de los dos se quisiere limpiar el otro se sale fuera por un rato."] BN: MS 872, 258r–v.
 18. "Exortamos y mandamos a todas las Religiosas que se apareten y abstengan de tener amistades y tratos particulares con clérigos, frailes, ni seglares, pena de privación de voz activa y pasiva por dos años" (*Constituciones generales*, 79v).
 19. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 695.
 20. "Ultimadamente muchas veces estando en la menstruación me hacía abrir la puerta como tengo dicho, para verme la cara. Yo la tenía pálida . . . repugnábalo pero tenía que obedecer por desenfadarlo. Otras en el confesionario y en la misma confesión después de preguntarme de mi estado o informado de la actual indisposición, me decía: *Límpiate para estarás muy mojada?? Pon la mano encima de la natura, estiendala a lo llano por encima y éntrate un dedo dentro de ella. A*

- esto yo verdaderamente me aturdía i pasmaba, se lo reprendía como le dijese que callase: Me instaba, *haya muchacha como esta! Habrá muchacha más aspera! Hazlo, proseguía, ya que el padre no te lo puede hacer; Ah! Si yo estuviese allí dentro::: Si fuese fulana (nombrándomela) tu amiga! Pero mira, ella que te lo haga, y tu se lo harás a ella. Si, creeme porque no tengo otro descanso. Haz de saber que siempre estoy pensando en ti*" (AHN: Inquisición, legajo 563, n.p.). See also Haliczzer, 159.
21. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 300.
 22. Ibid.
 23. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 301.
 24. Ibid., 308.
 25. "Cuando mira, no mirar fijando los ojos con demasiada viveza y afecto, y cuando se ríe, que sea sin abrir desompuestamente la boca. Cuando habla sin torcer los labios, ni haciendo otras acciones semejantes a estas, ajenas de toda buena compostura y mortificacion" (*Ceremonial*, 110).
 26. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 300–301.
 27. Ibid., 690.
 28. Ibid., 301.
 29. Ibid., 300.
 30. Ibid., 307.
 31. Ibid., 309.
 32. For the Spanish text, see Teresa de Jesús, *Obras Completas*, ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Steggink, 272.
 33. Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*, ed. Santullano, 306.
 34. Ibid., 304.
 35. "Ninguna virtud más encomendada en el estado religioso, que la fraterna caridad. Por aquí comenzó san Gerónimo la regla que dio a las monjas; y este fue el título de su primer capítulo, y lo primero que las encargó: 'Esta unión y caridad hace a las religiosas, que sean religiosas, sin estas el monasterio es infierno, y sus moradores demonios.' Y que mayor infierno, que aver de estar toda la vida juntas, y encerradas entre quatro paredes, sin poderse dividir u solo instante, y tener entre si bandos, diferencias y enemistades, ¿pero si hay unión, y caridad (añade el Santo) la religión será un paraíso, y sus moradores ángeles, entre los quales no ay pleytos, ni contiendas, ni disensiones algunas" (Villegas, 227).
 36. "Ay caminos (dize el Espiritu Santo) que le parecen al hombre buenos, y vienen a parar en la muerte. Tal es este camino de las amistades particulares, que en decir amistad, amor y correspondencia, parece que es un camino seguido, cierto, y seguro para el Cielo; y a vezes no lo es, sino para el infierno, y su fin, y paradero muerte eterna. Porque como gravemente ponderó san Gerónimo, el amor que el principio comenzó espiritual y por fines superiores, a la postre se tuerce, y viene a parar en carnal, vano e impertinente. Pues la esposa de Christo, que quiere ver, si su aficion es carnal o espiritual, pongase al espejo que el serafico Doctor San Buenavertuas (cap 16 de proceso religioso) la pone delante, y así verá claramente las calidades de su amor. Siete indicios trae el santo del amor

- carnal, a donde se descubren otros tantos inconvenientes estas amistades particulares, que son el veneno de la verdadera caridad. No haré mas que trasladar un capítulo del serafico doctor, que es todo de oro" (*ibid.*, 232–33).
37. "El primer indicio, son las pláticas que entre si tienen lo que se quieren bien; que si es su amor espiritual, siempre tratan de Dios, y de las cosas santas; pero si es carnal, de ninguna manera tratan de eso; porque como este es juglar, y entretenido, todo se le va en cuentecillos, gracias, y chistes, siendo el plato ordinario de sus pláticas, tratar de lo mucho que entre si se quieren, y de quien ama más a quien. Y para una plática tan vana como esta son cortos los días, y las noches se hazen un soplo. Cuando otro inconveniente no tuviera este vicio sino robarnos el tiempo precioso, por este solo devian las esposas de Christo evitar semejantes amistades entre si. . . . Dexas que una religiosa el mundo por solo vacar a Dios; encerrada entre cuatro paredes las busca el deudo, el amigo, y el pariente; y cuando ella como virgen discreta se recata deste trato, alzando mano de semejantes pláticas, aun no está segura, dentro de su misma casa hallará, si no se cautela, quien la enlace en los lazos de su propia carne; importuno enemigo que con tanta demasía nos busca, y aun a veces nos halla" (Villegas, chapter 5).
 38. "El segundo indicio del amor carnal es el cariño con que en todas ocasiones se miran las que bien se quieren: siempre quisieran estar juntas, andando la una arrimada a la otra, sin saberse apartar un punto, ocasionandose de aquí el perderse el respeto, con acciones libres, y la gravedad debida a una esposa de Christo. Al contrario el amor espiritual es tan serio y grave y circunspecto, que no hace nada en secreto, que no lo pueda sin vergüenza hacer un publico, regulando la gravedad de sus acciones al peso, y gravedad de su amor" (*ibid.*).
 39. "El tercero indicio y daño destas amistades particulares, es la inquietud de pensamiento, y desasosiego del corazón, quando no sabe que hace la persona amada, donde está, con quien habla, que tiene, si esta con poca salud; si ha menester algo. Y divertida, y suspensa el alma conta estos vanos cuidados, no puede orar libremente ni vacar con quietud a la Divina contemplación: y andando tan destraydo el corazón, estara la religiosa en el coro orando con el cuerpo, y con el alma en la celda de su amiga, y no verá la hora de acabar la oración para verse con ella. El amor espiritual es quieto, y sosegado y nunca mas quieto, que quando más amas, encomendando a Dios a la persona a quien quiere bien, en quietud, y silencio" (*ibid.*).
 40. "El cuarto indicio deste amor carnal, y otro inconveniente destas amistades, es la impaciencia, de que se dexa llevar la persona que bien quiere, quando ve, que su amiga pone en otra los ojos: la envidia, si otra le da algo; los celos, si se aparta de su lado; y de aquí nacen las riñas, y contiendas en las comunidades. Que como el amor carnal hace suyo lo que ama, y este sea tan descortes, y mal partido, siente que nadie entre a la parte de lo que tiene tan en el alma. El amor espiritual por el contrario se alegra de ver, que otros quieran bien a quien el ama; y nunca mas contento que quando muchas conocen la bondad que el conoce" (*ibid.*).

41. “El quinto indicio deste amor desordenado es la ira, y turbación que a veces hay entre las que así se quieren; . . . a ese mismo si hay entre las dos la menor causa de ofensión, exceden los limites del justo sentimiento, aborreciendose con igual desorden que habian tenido en amarse. De donde nacen las queexas inmortales de la una contra la otra, el darse en rostro con los beneficios que se han hecho; el descubrirse los secretos, y las faltas que saben. El amor espiritual al contrario es sufrido, y paciente como dice san Pablo; Duelese del agravio que le dio el amado, no por su daño propio, sino por el de su hermana; y con espíritu de blandura la da saludables consejos en orden a su bien” (ibid.).
42. “Es sexto indicio e inconveniente, son los donecillos y dadivas impertinentes, fometos de vanos amorcillos; porque el amor espiritual no gusta de esas niñerías y dizecillos de niños, como dice san Gerónimo: la oración fervorosa, las palabras de edificación, el ayudarse en las necesidades, esas son el aceite en que el amor de Dios se ceba, y se sustenta” (ibid.).
43. “El séptimo indicio, y último inconveniente destas amistades particulares es aquella desordenada disimulación, con que una encubre las culpas de la otra, escusando cada qual a su amiga las faltas que son ofensivas a la comunidad. Y cuando la Prelada celosa riñe con la una, salir la otra a su defensa, diminuyendo la gravedad de la culpa, cuando no la puede negar, por ser notoria. Por el contrario el amor espiritual tiene ojos de lince, para ver los defectos de la persona que ama; y al paso que de verdad la quiere, al mismo desea su emienda, y corrección, y ayuda a ella. Asi vemos que lo hace Dios, castigando más gravemente en sus amigos, solo porque lo son, los defectos que a no serlo disimulara su castigo, para la otra vida. Todo este discurso es de san Buenaventura; y casi por las mismas palabras” (ibid.).
44. “Estos son los indicios e inconvenientes que hay en las amistades particulares, que son la peste de las comunidades religiosas, como afirman los santos . . . si todas las amistades particulares son de grave inconveniente en la comunidad; pero singularmente lo son, cuando se hallan en las preladas. Porque cuando se inclinan más a la deuda, y a la amiga, que a la que no lo es, ofenden grandemente a la caridad comun” (ibid., 234).
45. “Me resulta difícil creer que no existieran; parece más razonable pensar que no se les daba importancia” (Vigil, 250). See also Martín, “Rhetoric,” 67.
46. “Desde que la Novicia pone los pies en el Convento, ha de llevar este principal cuidado, de conservar siempre su corazón con independencia santa, y sin apego imperfecto a ninguna criatura” (Arbiol, 454).
47. “Padre, y qué siente Ud. de estas amistades particulares, así de las de aca dentro de las Religiosas unas con otras, y de las personas de afuera que comunmente llaman *devociones*?” / “Siento Señora que cualquier amor que pase de la línea de honesto, sea de Religiosa a Religiosa, hora a persona del siglo, en quien hizo voto de castidad son dos pecados mortales, uno contra la virtud de la Religión y así cualquier Religiosa que mantuviere alguna amistad dentro o fuera, que pase a inhonesta, está en estado de condenacion e inabsolube, y esto Señora, igno-rantísimo ha de ser el Confesor que la absolviere, porque si la tal amistad es

- adentro, está la Religiosa en ocasion próxima de pecar, si es afuera, cuando menos, está en costumbre de pecar, todo inabsoluble” (Borda, 44v).
48. “Y no se pondere poco lo que nuestra santa Madre Teresa de Jesús puso en las Constituciones: que ‘procure la priora ser amada para ser obedecida.’ Por esto digo que sea este aviso el primero: de que con amor granjee los corazones de sus súbditas, con fin de tenerlas unidas para que con más paz y aprovechamiento las gobierne, y a ellas les sea menos penoso el yugo y carga de tantas cargas como en vida tan estrecha hay, y tengan sola por amiga a la que está en lugar de Cristo para que con esto se cierre la puerta a buscar *amistades particulares* que tanto destruyen la verdadera unión y caridad, la cual se granjea y alcanza con el cebo común de beneficios” (María de San José, 239; emphasis mine).
 49. “De Irene, y de las que le parecen en el humor, hay poco que decir, aunque dan mucho en qué entender a quien las tiene a su cargo. Porque de ordinario son melancólicas, que es una pasión que con ímpetu sigue el apetito y se aparta de la razón, a quien como a caballos desbocados son necesarios frenos. Y con esto me parece está dicho todo. . . . Nuestra santa Madre, en unos avisos que escribió enseñando a las prioras cómo se habrán de haber con las semejantes, después de haber dado reglas concluye con que es necesario no pierdan el temor, que con él se gobiernan mejor. . . . Así que, cuando durante el año de prueba se vienen a descubrir humores semejantes a los de Irene, no se puede en buena conciencia admitirlas a la profesión, porque sin milagro de Dios no hay esperanza de que cambien: milagro que no es justo pedir, ni que en este azar se cargue a la Religión de carga tan pesada y hasta peligrosa, pues es más fácil copiar vicios que virtudes y se encuentran más imitadores de un mal ejemplo que de uno bueno” (ibid., 429–31).
 50. “Y todo el amor que tira / amistades perniciosas, / es peste en las religiosas, / infernal” (ibid., 524).
 51. “Cuando conoció a Teresa y se convirtió en su compañera inseparable, su amistad y afectividad se extendió de modo especial a aquellas personas que más amaban a la M. Teresa; ésta le llamó la atención sobre la no conveniencia de atar el cariño de su corazón a unas personas determinadas, para que pudiera guardar la libertad de amar sin sujeción; y la misma Ana confiesa que no lo consiguió, pues su apego a Teresa y a las amigas de ésta era fuerte y natural: sólo en la muerte de S. Teresa recibió de la Santa la gracia de la liberación afectiva: *Ella me lo alcanzó, porque desde entonces he sido libre y desasida, y me parece que tengo más amor a las que amo sin lisi3n de amor propio, y en lo demás, es como si yo fuese sola en este mundo, que a todas las amo en Dios y por Dios*” (Urkiza, 355).
 52. “A penas la vio y trató santa Teresa, cuando luego la escogió por compañera suya, y si bien no la llevó luego consigo a las fundaciones, siempre que estaba en el monasterio de Avila la tenía en la celda, la comunicaba mas particularmente que a las otras, como en varios lugares he advertido, y como lo escribe ella en la relacion o historia de su vida, donde dice hablando de la Santa: *Desde que entré a tomar el habito me llevia su celda, y siempre mientas vivi3 estuvo con ella . . . unidas*

- con un vínculo de amor indisoluble, tanto que no se podía hallar la una sin la otra" (Enriquez, 306).
53. "Quien considerare la estrecha amistad, el amor grande que entre estas santas esposas de Cristo hubo toda la vida, y cuan unidos y asidos estaban entre sí sus corazones, pues no podían persuadirse a apartarse la una de la otra un punto, no hay duda que aguardara, grandes sentimientos, abundantes lágrimas, en una despedida tan amarga . . . Pues ni aun después de muerta quería apartarse de ella. Resolvióse consigo misma de quedarse en Alba en compañía de su santo cuerpo" (ibid., 393 and 400).
 54. "La Beata procura quitarle estos miedos y celos mostrándole una afectuosidad muy acentuada, con constante afirmación de amor y amistad, intentaba calmar el corazón de la Priora inglesa" (Urkiza, 71).
 55. "Yo la amo y la quiero y no soy atada a nadie. Esto sabe bien mi Señor: que no me estorbará nadie el amor que la tengo" (February 1617); "Mas la puedo asegurar que la quiero sobre todas, y que ninguna es tan bastante para tener yo el gusto y satisfacción que con mi hija carísima" (February 1617); "No sé por qué me dice si estoy enojada; no por cierto, hija mía de mi alma, no lo estoy ni tengo de qué si no es de mis pecados y miserias. Yo la quiero bien siempre; sólo deseo no esté su espíritu cautivo a nada sino a Dios, que siendo señora de sí y de sus pasiones, adonquiera y con quienquiera hallará paz y cielo" (June 1617); "Y crea, mi hija carísima, que cuando la escribo secamente, como bien lo dice, que no es falta de amor, que se la tengo a su alma como a la mía. Mas ¿no sabe que dicen un refrán: 'El que te quisiere bien, te hará llorar, porque te hablará sin velo?'" (August 1617); "Que yo la amo de buen corazón sin ninguna disimulación, de manera que todas me dicen que si la quiero más que a ellas; es amor el decirlo, que todas la quieren bien como ven que la quiero como a hija mayor" (November–December 1619). All letters quoted from Urkiza.
 56. "Heme consolado con la de V. R. y deseo que fuera muchas veces, que cierto, mi Madre, que estamos todas dos en una misma queja: que yo me parece me ha olvidado, y que si me quisiese como yo la quiero me escribiría más veces. Esto no es para que vea lo que la amo en el Señor, que es la que más tengo en mi memoria y la que más debo de todas" (Urkiza).
 57. "No sé qué me diga del silencio de V. R., . . . que la amo de todo corazón y estimo. . . . Pues no la dejaré en tanto que estoy en este mundo, . . . la querré y amaré como a Madre mía y en la otra vida lo hemos de ser también" (quoted in Arenal and Schlau, 34).
 58. For the Spanish text, see Teresa de Jesús, ed. Santullano, 1041 (June 4, 1578).
 59. For the Spanish text, see Teresa de Jesús, ed. Santullano, 856 (July 2, 1576).
 60. Similar affection is evident in letters between Isabel de Jesús and Inés del Santísimo Sacramento.
 61. "Crea que estamos hechizadas la una con la otra, porque el día que no hablo con Vuestra Reverenciada no puedo vivir" (Torres, 65).
 62. "Mucho se ha escrito sobre las amistades particulares entre monjas y mucho temía Santa Teresa ese 'humor de melancolía' por el que se dejaban llevar

muchas religiosas, que ante la extrema vigilancia que se ejercía sobre los contactos con el sexo opuesto intentaba satisfacer su necesidad de afecto con el propio. Pueden ser las reiteradas muestras de añoranza de la monja amiga un ejemplo de esa melancolía que, por otra parte no es de extrañar, teniendo en cuenta las duras condiciones de vida en las que se desarrollaba la clausura” (ibid., 46).

63. “Sin embargo, consultando otros epistolarios de miembros de la orden carmelitana, podemos comprobar cómo este tono intimista era bastante común entre ellos constituyendo en cierto modo un estilo epistolar común a los miembros de la orden” (ibid., 26).
64. See Howe for a general study of Ana de San Agustín’s life and work.
65. “Dire lo que me paso años ha y es que una vez estando en oración pidiendo por los que están en pecado mortal me dijo Nuestro Señor ‘atiende a lo que tienes dentro de casa’ y esta palabra me dijo su magestad por la boca de un crucifijo de bronce que yo tenía. Y a otro día en la noche quando nos ibamos a recoger díjome una monja que la hiciese caridad de prestarle el Cristo que yo tenía. Yo lo hice así y en el discurso de la noche halleme con mi Cristo y díjele como mi Señor ‘¿os habeis venido?’ y hablóme y díjome ‘estánme ahora ofendiendo.’ A mí me causó gran tenura y a la mañana vino a mí la monja y díjome que el Cristo que le havía dado tiniéndole a la cavecera de la cama se le havía desaparecido. Y yo la dije que a mí se me havía venido que mirase ella que causa le havía dado a su magestad. Ella comenzó a llorar y me contó todo lo que havía pasado de que Nuestro Señor havía disgustado y aunque era una sola la monja que vino a mí a pedirme el Cristo y a darme después quanta dello dos estavan en la celda quando se les desapareció. Esta de que hablo y otra en las quales he visto desde que les pasó esto muy particular enmienda de la fuerza que en sus almas hizo esto, bendito sea tal cuidado que parece que le va a Nuestro Señor mucho en que se salven sus criaturas no yendole cosa, según con la versa que les busca su remedio” (BN: MS 13523, 88v–89r). See also Howe, 104–5.
66. “Acredite esta misma verdad otro suceso de dos religiosas. Estas profesavan amistad particular y como la que no se funda en Dios, anda siempre asistida de falta e impefecciones, eran considerables las que por esta causa cometían en detrimento de la Comunidad, que en notar particularidades es lince, aunque no se sabía lo que entre las dos a solas pasava. Mas la Venerable Madre ilustrada de Dios en su gobierno, participava de el conocimiento de lo que hacían en el más oculto retiro. Es el natural de las mujeres detenido, mientras no está apasionado y cuanto tiene de remiso antes de arder la pasión, tanto suele tener de arrojado, cuando se rige a su impulso, pues ni el temor le detiene ni el juicio le reprime. Conque en allanándose el pecho, suele declinar a extremos. Teníanlos sin duda estas dos Religiosas su amistad, dexando obrar al afecto sin atenciones al reparo, que si en lo público era en cosas leves, en lo secreto se acercaban a graves; ya entrándose una en la celda de la otra de noche, sagrado que en la Reforma se respeta con decoro; ya juntándose a hablar en tiempo de silencio, con menos respeto a la regla, que lo prohibe. Eran estas comunicaciones, y platicas ofen-

sivas a la caridad y a la justicia, pues a vueltas del cariño con que las dos se correspondían. Mormuraban de las otras, fomentando repugnancias con ellas, y consigo menos Religioso afecto, manifestando llanezas. No me atrevo a juzgar avría en esta materia, aun que la demostración que hizo el cielo, supone mucho. Verdad es, que en personas, que están por su estado obligadas a tanta perfección, este género de culpas haze en el corazón de Dios tanto peso, como las graves del seglar, que le esta menos obligado" (Alonso de San Jerónimo, 82v–83r).

67. Compare the biographer's restraint, for instance, to the sexual specifics detailed in the case against the seventeenth-century Italian nun Benedetta Carlini, such as when "she grabbed her companion's hand by force, and putting it under herself, she would have her put her finger in her genitals, and holding it there she stirred herself so much that she corrupted herself" (translation quoted in Brown, *Immodest*, 162).
68. "Esto pasava en el Convento, y la Santa Prelada, con el zelo que solía, estava una noche hacienda Oración a Dios por los que estavan en pecado mortal. Llorando sus inocentes ojos las culpas, que se cometían en el mundo; acepta fue su Oración, como siempre; pero porque en el empleo della con los estraños no defraudase a los propios, le respondió su Majestad por la boca de un Crucifixo de bronce estas palabras: *Atendie a lo que tienes en tu casa*. Con este aviso le infundió la noticia de los excesos que entre estas sus dos subditas pasavan. Ya se hecha a ver, quanto obraría en su corazón para solicitar el remedio el imperio de tan divina voz, y el fuego de su zelo, avivado con el soplo, que formaron los labios difuntos de un Dios muerto en su imagen, y vivo en su sentimiento. La Venerable Madre lo concibió contra si misma, no contra las culpadas, pareciéndole su humildad, lo estava más en su descuido, que ellas en su desorden. Concibió luego en su ánimo el atajar el daño, pero sin negar al discurso el tiempo para discurrir el más proporcionado medio. Christo le dio el aviso, no el modo con que avía de executar su gusto. Levantóse de la Oracion, fué a su celda más pensativa, que presurosa, y en el tránsito se encontró a una de las dos Religiosas culpadas. Aunque lo estava tanto en su proceder, no le reprehendió el rostro con la severidad del ceño, que disimula mucho cuidados, quien alimenta en caridad afectos. Era el corazón de la Venerable Madre mar muy espacioso, que sin que las olas llegasen al muelle de los ojos, para atemorizar sus hijas, las quebrantava en la roca de su pecho, para llevar en si todo lo penoso del golpe. Mostróle blandura en el rostro; y eso le ocasionó, el que con llaneza llegase la Religiosa a pedirle para aquella noche un Santo Christo, que acostumbrava a traer en el pecho, significando tenía necesidad deste socorro. Desprendióse del pecho, y besándole con reverencia los pies, y condescendiendo con su devoción, si darse por entendida, se lo dio con mucho consuelo. Viendo, que deseava librarse del achaque, quien tan solicita procurava la medecina; y que no podía estar mucho tiempo en la caída, quien pedía tan amorosa, y piadosa mano. Con esta consideración se desahogó su pena, descuidando por aquella noche, de que repitiesen la antigua culpa. Mas puede mucho una costumbre, y aunque haya buenos

deseos, los malogra la ocasión, estando el ánimo flaco. Pusiéronse en ella, y faltaron esta, como las antecedentes noches; y así fue el propósito, y prevención nueva circunstancia el delito. Por lo menos así lo dio a entender Christo. Pues estando las dos amigas en la celda de la una a deshora de la noche en las pláticas que otras veces. Irritado Christo en su Imagen se salió de la celda, desprendándose del pecho, en que le tenía asido la Religiosa, y se fue a la de la V. Madre. Ella estaba en Oración, como solía. Y viendo venir por el aire su Christo de bronce, quedó espantada. Preguntóle amorosa, después de averle recibido en sus brazos: *¿Cómo, mi Señor, os aveis venido?* Y la divina Imagen, respondió, embolviendo entre sensibles suspiros las palabras, o cuanto dolor ocultan! *Porque me están allí ofendiendo.* Cubriósele toda el alma de congoja, y el corazón de ternuras” (ibid., 83r–v).

69. “Aquella la ocasionó la ofensa, que a un Señor, a quien tanto amaba en su casa, le hacían la ternura; el verle venir al cariño de sus brazos a mitigar sentimientos, y solicitar descansos. Claro está, que su honrado, y amoroso corazón haría empeño para el desagravio, y el desempeño y diligencias. Y como las más propias, para templar en Dios rigores, son el tenerlos con nosotros mismos, hasta verter la sangre de las venas, y lágrimas de los ojos. A un tiempo mismo se aprovechó de ambos medios, tomando una horrible disciplina; y llorando por el ageno desorden, que de razones tan humildes, y amorosas le haría ya para inclinarle al perdón, ya para templar su sentimiento” (ibid., 83v–84r).
70. “Toda la noche estuvo en Oracion, batallando con Dios, como otro Moyses por el perdon de su pueblo. Luciose bien en el efecto, porque apenas vino el día, cuando la una destas Religiosas, a quien entregó el Santo Christo, llegó a su celda tan afligida, y llorosa, que antes que hablase la lengua, dieron voces los ojos. (Si el ruido de las lagrimas, que vertian, puede con propiedad llamarse voz) dixole (como si ella lo ignorase) lo que aquella noche le avia sucedido. Ponderó su ingratitud, su inconstancia, su infidelidad, su flaqueza, y el temor que avia concebido, con averla Dios dexado. Viendo la Venerable Madre, que era tan riguroso fiscal de si misma, juzgó ociosa la reprehension, y necesario el consuelo, que añadir a su pesaroso reconocimiento asperezas, fuera aventurar la perseverancia en el. Y viendo un corazón afligido, apretarle más los cordeles en el potro de su confusión, parece tormento con visos de crueldad. Consolóla mucho, valiéndose de la bondad divina, no menos fácil para rendirla con lágrimas, que para irritarla con culpas. Propuso fervorosa la enmienda, instruyóla la Santa los medios para conseguirla, y el principal, que se confesase luego. Para todo la halló facil; y fue tan grande la mudanza, que entre las dos Religiosas hubo en adelante, que eran el exemplo de las otras, y el alivio de la Venerable Prelada, que en cosa ninguna lo tenía mayor, que en ver que sus súbditas sirviesen a Dios con perfección” (ibid., 84r–v).
71. “La vino una vez a la memoria que había recibido algunos beneficios de una Religiosa de su monasterio y obligada de la gratitud, y también por inclinación genial estaba pensando el modo de introducirse en la amistad, y particular trato con ella. Eran tan remotos los indicios de este pensamiento, que aun no había pasado por

- la reflexión, y advertencia de ella misma. *Hermana* (la dixo la Ven. Madre) *mire lo que piensa, Dios pide de nosotras una gran pureza de Alma, y las amistades particulares apartan la intencion de la rectitud de la caridad.* Instruyóla despues en las máximas de la imparcial dilección conveniente a los que profesan la Vida común, siendo a la verdad amor de contrabando el que no entra por las puerttas de la caridad de Jesus Christo, sino abriendo roturas y divisiones en los animos, como acontece en las aficiones particulares” (Felix de Jesús María, 263).
72. “Una de las Religiosas desafectas de la Ven. Madre, había contrahido estrecha amistad con otra de su genio. Este amor era un miserable origen de disgustos y disensiones; porque se habían pactado reciprocamente la privativa de los corazones, en conformidad, que cualquier afecto, que se desviasse a otro objeto, era un declarado agravio, que usurpaba los adquiridos derechos de poseer plenamente las voluntades mutuamente entregada; de aquí resultaba, que este amor particular era una ofensa comun a las demás, empeño de discordias y un motivo de consumirse entre sí de quejas las dos Amigas” (ibid., 275). See also Lavrin, *Brides*, 240, for a partial English translation.
 73. “La Sierva de Dios horrorizada de tal amor, que alza llamas de zelo, para abrasarlos animos religiosos, reprendió a ésta, de quien hablamos, o porque fuese la más obstinada o porque la inspiración la moviesse a esta con más impulso que a la otra. Escusóse al principio, sincerando esta comunicación con varios pretextos; más ofendida al fin por haber demostrado la Sierva de Dios la insubstitencia de sus excusas, la quiso volver las espaldas: detuvola la caritativa Madre, y llegando sus brazos amorosamente al cuello de la Religiosa, puso en él un Rosario, en que ella misma rezaba; y sin decirla mas, la dexó” (Felix de Jesús María, 275).
 74. “Diga a la Madre María, que me deje, que yo no he propuesto cosa alguna” (ibid., 276).
 75. “Un amor muy particular hacia la misma, mas nada vicioso, porque era la particularidad según Cristo” (ibid.).
 76. “Ronda entonces por el claustro de Santa Clara la sombra de Safo” (Achury Valenzuela, xlix).
 77. “Luego el enemigo que me vido en tan mala disposición, levantó contra mí la mayor guerra que le fue permitida, por mi ingratitud a los beneficios de Dios. Esta fue por medio de algunas personas que con halagos y demostraciones de grande amor, se fueron introduciendo, de suerte que no me daban lugar de descanso; fue esto causa de grandes tormentos míos, porque con color y pretexto de agradecida, y de no hacerme incomunicable ni extraordinaria, perdía mucho tiempo y daba lugar a sus aficiones” (Francisca Josefa, 53).
 78. “Como cada una la movía el enemigo a que sintiera el que me viera la otra, traían entre sí guerras y discordias. Todo esto era para mí muerte y tormento; quería huír de todas, y no había cómo. Traía en mi corazón un remordimiento y tormento tal, que ya me parecía nada todo cuanto hasta allí había padecido. Las amigas que ellas tenían, sentían y se enojaban hasta hacer extremos públicos porque iban donde yo estaba; yo me veía hecho escándalo del convento” (ibid.).

79. “Hacían y decían contra mí cosas intolerables. Si leía en el coro un libro que trata de las amistades particulares y el daño que hacen, decían que yo fingía aquello para quitarles sus amigas y que me fueran a ver a mí. Echábanlas de su celda, en sabiendo que me iban a ver, y con esto el enemigo les ponía más espuelas para que en ninguna parte me dejaran, con quejas e historias. Ahora me da horror acordarme de este modo de tormento y lo poco que podía para librarme de él, y cómo andaba temblando y temiendo sin saber dónde esconderme porque yo era el asunto de todas las conversaciones y pleitos, y la irrisión de toda la casa” (Francisca Josefa, 53–54).
80. Ibsen likewise suggests, “Perhaps the book Francisca is reading is Teresa de Jesús’s *Camino de perfección*, which gives advice on this topic” (157).
81. “A esto se llegaba el venir ellas llorando a decirme que pasaban trabajos y penas por asistirme en mis necesidades y enfermedades; que las padecía ya mayores, porque, además de aquellos fuertes dolores que había sufrido en pie toda la vida, me habían dado unos dolores de estómago agudísimos, y con tantos desmayos y tormentos en todo el cuerpo, que no me podía valer ni estar en mí; pues como yo vía todo esto y sabía que era cierto que pasaban los trabajos que ellas decían, y que les daban de bofetadas y arrojaban las camas a los patios, y era yo la causa, me afligía por consolarlas y nada podía hacer sin grande tormento y trabajo, porque de todo levantaba el enemigo nuevas llamas y cuentos” (Francisca Josefa, 54).
82. “En este tiempo de quince años padecí mucho con una mulata, *medio hombre y mujer, según decían, la cual me perseguía más que si fuera hombre*. Y era de manera que si en la iglesia no estaba seguía porque allí me enviaba recados y me arrojaba billetes y regalos. Y yo donde la veía me parecía que veía al demonio porque sus palabras no eran dignas de ser oídas que eran grandes sus desvergüenzas. Ni en casa no tenía venía porque su casa estaba enfrente de la mía y mi ventana en frente de la suya. Y ella era criada de unas malas mujeres y desde su ventana no hacía todo el día sino arrojarme regalos mas yo no los probaba por que . . . [bottom of 24v cut off] algunos hechizos en ellos y así padecía mucho” (BN: MS 13493, 24v–25r).
83. “Y era mi casa tan registrada de la suya que cuando no me veía de parte de la ventana me buscaba por las azoteas que por no verla ni oírla me iba muchas veces. Y en viéndome sola no hacía sino decirme muchas palabras amorosas y ofrecirme joyas y vestidos y que alzase el rostro a mirarla. Y yo no hacía sino llorar con su magestad porque le daba licencia a aquella criatura para que me contrallara tanto y esta casa no tenía patio y por descansar me iba a la azotea y en viendo que no estaba allí me buscaba y luego me atormentaba” (ibid., 24v).
84. “Y arrojóme un collar de piezas de oro con diamantes y rubíes muy rico y un bolsón lleno de coronas de oro el cual presente me pareció al enemigo porque yo estaba segura y descuidada de que ella me viese en mi azotea y con el golpe que dio cabe mi aquella maldita moneda me asombré mas yo tomélo del suelo y cogía algunos doblones que con el golpe se desenbolvieron del papel y se salieron del bolsón y se lo arrojé luego sin tardarme un solo punto y le di con todo

en medio de las narices y como era cosa de tanto peso la maltraté muy amargamente que fue necesario la curasen mas de allí 7 o 8 días y con todo eso no me dejó sino mas me perseguía tanto que me pedía alguna cosa mía aunque [bottom of page cut off in manuscript] un solo cabello de mi cabeza y diome arrojado envuelto en un papel unos tres bocados de pan que los comiese y no tomélos y puse los sobre una ventana y ella decíame, 'ah traidora mala hembra que me haces perder que no te he podido engañar con promesas ni con regalos ni con joyas ni con cosas terrenas. Más fuerte eres que la muerte que a otras con una sola palabra las traigo tras de mí que haré para ti hace que si tu comieras el pan que te arrojé que otra cosa fuera.'

"Y acordéme del pan que me había arrojado y fui a verle y desenvolví el papel y estaba como cuando me le dio tan tierno. Y toméle y arrojéle en un muladar que estaba en aquella calle. Y andaba tan asombrada que no sabía que me hacer porque mi tía no daba crédito de las cosas que yo le decía. Que decía que qué tenía que temer a una mujer. Mas no me fiaba yo de eso porque por una pared se subía. A mí me se subió por una pared y quiso entrar por la ventana y yo fuime corriendo a la sala donde estaba mi tía y allí me caí sin poder hablar en más de una hora. Y entonces mi tía dijo yo tengo de ver estos disparates tuyos y se puso por una endidura de una puerta y yo cabe la ventana muy serena. Y así como la mulata me vio sola empezó a decir lo que solía y dijo mi tía que está detrás de la mulata un capitán de galera hablándole a la mulata todo lo que me decía mas yo no le vi jamás porque nunca la miraba. Y así mi tía entonces me llevó en casa de unas amigas donde estuve escondida más de quince días sin que supiese donde estaba. Y quiso mis pecados que enviándome mi tía un regalo siguió la moza que lo llevaba y así allí se puso en un cantillo que ni de día ni de noche se quitaba de allí. Y traía a un terciado debajo de la capa. Y un sol vino de aquella señora donde yo estaba la fue a reñir y ella le desafió y pidió una espada y la mandaba mejor que un hombre. Y así me mudé de día aquella casa y se quedó esto así. Y al cabo de un año ni menos me fue a buscar un escribano y alguacil y yo no me acordaba que fuera lo que me quería así la justicia y como me turbé díjome el escribano 'no tema vd, que no venimos a que reciba turbación sino a que reciba corona de prudente y sabia mujer' sin más cosas que me dijeron . . . y fue que la mulata estaba presa porque había engañado a más de cincuenta doncellas y había echado a perder más de 30 XXXXX [words scratched out in the original] así me lo dijo el escribano y a mí me tomaron mi declaración quedando el escribano y el alguacil espantados de las cosas que yo le sufrí que aquí son largas de contar por todo sea mi señor dios glorificado por siempre jamás amen. Desterraron a esta mujer de su villa y a su tierra con doscientos azotes a gloria de nuestro señor" (BN: MSS 13493, 24v–27v).

85. "La pusieron a que viviese con una mujer cuyas costumbres no eran tan ajustadas y aplicadas a la devoción, como deseaba la virtuosa doncella; y así padeció mucho en cuatro o cinco años que vivió en esta casa" (Alejandro de la Madre de Dios, 30).
86. See Hegstrom, and Arenal and Schlau, 148–51.

87. “Yo con mi compañía representamos una comedia en el convento de la Victoria, cosa que es costumbre hacerse y siempre se ha hecho” (quoted in Cotarelo, 469).
88. “Padre, y en oír músicas, ver comedias, y bailes deshonestos hay quebrantamiento del voto?” (Borda, 45v–46r).
89. “Padre, y en quitarse el hábito las monjas para hacer alguna comedia, o otro festejo así, en una cuelga de una Abadesa, o en una Carnestolendas, hay materia de pecado? Señora, del mismo modo respondió, que si es dentro del convento, recreationis causa, no hay culpa, pero si es delante de los seglares, hay culpa mortal” (ibid., 45v–46r).
90. “La risa que provocarían entre las espectadoras estas peleas de gatos escenificadas” (Mujica, 198)
91. “Tibieza: No te enojés, por tu vida, / que por quererte yo tanto/ te doy amorosas quejas. / Alma: . . . y por ella, no te quiero, / que es tu mortal enemiga. / y si hay quien la contradiga / en mi casa y a mi lado, / iráse, y como la amo/ siento mucho darla enojos . . . Pues mira, y tenlo por cierto, / que la Oración ha de ser/ todo mi bien y mi ser, / mi guía, mi regla y norte.”
92. “Tibieza: Ea, dame aquesas manos. / Alma: Y los brazos, ¿por qué no? / (*Sale la Oración*) / Oración: Porque lo impediré yo, / que aún estoy viva en el mundo.”
93. This line (“I can’t be as completely off track as you think”) is taken from Mujica, 210n51.
94. “Tibieza: Bien te puedes acostar, / que todo está prevenido. / Alma: En mi vida no he tenido/ tal cansancio y pesadumbre. / Oración: Aquesta negra costumbre / de conversar esta dama/ hasta ponerte en la cama, / pienso que no ha de parar. / Alma: No me puedo desviar/ tan del todo como piensas. / Oración: Estas todas son ofensas/ que se hacen en mi cara.”
95. “Oración: ¿Cuándo te tengo de ver, / Alma, sin Tibieza al lado? / Alma: Yo no la puedo dejar, / que me entretiene y regala, / y me quiere con exceso.”
96. “Alma: ¡Ay mi amor, ay mi querido/ qué ingrata he sido y qué fiera! [*Sale el Divino Amor*.] Alma: A ti se deben las glorias,/ dulce dueño de mi vida. / Muy engañada vivía; / la Tibieza lo causó. / Amor: Pues por eso vine yo / a desterrar a Tibieza. / Vete, necia porfiada. [. . .] / Alma: Confío en mi amado Esposo; / no busco el dulce y sabroso / sino el desinteresado, / . . . / Amor: ¡Oh con cuánta voluntad, / Alma, escucho tus favores! / Manifiestan tus ardores / lo aprovechada [rendida] que estás. / Agora conocerás / cuántos daños te causaba / la engañadora Tibieza.”
97. For more on Marcela’s short biography of Catalina de San José, see Arenal and Schlau, 246–48, 268–77.

CHAPTER 6

1. See Vélez-Quinones, “Deficient” and *Monstrous*; González-Ruiz; Stroud, *Plot*; and Oropesa.
2. “Pues ha de ser más que de hielo el hombre que no se abrase de lujuria viendo

- una mujer desenfadada y desenvuelta, y algunas veces, para este efecto, vestida como hombre" (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 494).
3. "Qué ocasión más peligrosa estarse un mancebo *mirando* a una de estas mujeres . . . todo lo cual es de suyo provocativo a lujuria" (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 252, 268; emphasis mine).
 4. For the Spanish text, see Kaminsky, 252, 254.
 5. See Heiple, "Góngora," and De Armas, "Deflecting," for discussion of homoeroticism and Ganymede in Golden Age Spain.
 6. "Es la obra más atrevida que conozco en el teatro del siglo XVII en cuanto a la experiencia sexual y de grupo" (Castillejo, 414).
 7. "¡Oh, padres cristianos! ¿No *viste* a tu hija antes que viese comedia con una dichosa ignorancia de estos peligros que vivía como inocente paloma? ¿No la *viste* después, que *abriendo los ojos* a la malicia, supo lo que debiera ignorar? Ya pide galas, ya desea salir, ya quiere *ver y ser vista*" (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 83; emphases mine).
 8. "Ponzoña sensual [que] arrojarán estas mujercillas desdichadas que andan en las comedias" (quoted in Cotarelo y Mori, 368).
 9. See also Otero-Torres, and Stroud, *Plot*.
 10. See Whitaker, 97 and 99, and Bravo-Villasante. Cotarelo y Mori dates the play's composition around 1637 (243). It was published separately—once in the late seventeenth century and again in the early eighteenth century (Cotarelo y Mori, 1918, 243; and Whitaker, 97–98). According to Whitaker, "the ultimate source of the title of the *comedia* is a *jácara* describing the recollections that pass through the mind of a certain *ruffian*, Añasco el de Talavera, as he wanders through the rooms and patios of an abandoned house of prostitution" (98).
 11. See also Velasco, "Early Modern."
 12. "No se hable de otra cosa / en Talavera. . . Es de suerte, / que hasta Madrid se divierte / su condición prodigiosa, / haze versos de buen ayre." All references to *Añasco* are cited from an early printed edition with no page numbers. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from act 1.
 13. "No, que no ay cosa / para mí tan odiosa, / como el aver nacido / sujeta a la prisión deste vestido, / y que me vean los hombres / muger, quando la embidia de sus nombres / toda el alma inquieta" (Cubillo).
 14. "Y oy llego a reconocer / tal diferencia en las dos, / que siendo muger vos, / muestra prima, no es muger" (ibid.).
 15. "Contra su natural / nació mi prima inclinada. . . Ella afectando rigor, quando pienso persuadilla, / se burla de la almohadilla, / y maldize el bastidor" (ibid.).
 16. "Marcelo: Luego te enamora? / Leonor: Y tanto/ en aquesto se desvela, / que me enamora, y me zela./ Marcelo: Que te zele no me espanto,/ mas que te enamore sí. / Leonor: Pues quien zela amando empieza. / Marcelo: Estraña naturaleza!" (ibid.).
 17. "Sabes que te adoro"; "Error extraño" (ibid.).
 18. "No es amor correspondencia? / No es Platonica opinion, / que amor es con-

- frontacion / de estrellas, y de ascendencia! / Pues si esta concurre en mi, / y es confrontacion de estrella, / como para obedecerla / dexaré de amarte a ti?" (ibid.).
19. "En tus ojos soberanos / veo el cielo de mi gloria, / en tu virtud mi victoria, / y mi laurel en tus manos. / En tu voluntad, la mía; / en tu hermosura, a mi amor; / en tu enojo mi temor; / y asi la bachillería / del discreto Cortesano, / que dize que puede ser / querer por solo querer, / tengo por corriente, y llano, / según la senceridad / deste afecto que te admira, / que siendo en todos mentira, / sólo en mi amore es verdad. / Porque en la afición más fuerte, / y de más divino apremio, / todos quieren por el premio, / y yo por sólo quererte" (ibid.).
 20. "Asi estarán mas seguras / las mugeres de su honor"; "Y no ves que en la crueldad / de tan indecente trato, / a cuchillas tu recato, / y ofendes tu honestidad? / No parecieras mejor, / de tu mismo ser llevada, / en el estrado sentada, / que esgrimiendo?" (ibid.).
 21. "Yo a querer, y tu a olvidar, / yo atrevida, y tu cobarde. / Siempre llegaremos tarde, / siendo en la amorosa llaga, / luz, que sin soplo se apage, / vela, que en tinieblas arde" (ibid.).
 22. "Estremado, / porque con razones fuertes / tu misma, prima, te advierte, / el grave error en que has dado" (ibid.).
 23. "Aquel nuevo maridaje / de hermosura y valentía, / mucho las almas atrae" (Cubillo, act 2).
 24. "Impertinente, / yo aunque hembra nací, soy diferente" (Cubillo, act 1).
 25. "Buelve la espada a tomar, / Chacon, y vea mi prima, / en quien la adora, y lastima, / una lición batallar" (ibid.).
 26. "¿Ay prima mía! ¿Qué has hecho?" "Tu hermosura lo ha causado" (ibid.).
 27. "Pues si en toda esta comedia / el Poeta lo ha dispuesto / de suerte, que siempre andamos / a palos, es mucho?" (Cubillo, act 3).
 28. "Necio, / es porque admiren prodigios / en mugeres destos tiempos, / unas dando cuchilladas, / y otras escribiendo versos" (ibid.).
 29. "En *Añasco el de Talavera*, Cubillo nos da el más desaforado ejemplo de mujer hombruna de caso contra naturaleza" (Bravo-Villasante, 108).
 30. "No hay que olvidar las potencialidades cómicas de una rebuscada misoginia. . . . Las aspiraciones de esa mujer siempre quedan frustradas, y los comentarios cómicos del gracioso ridiculizan su actitud varonil" (Marcello, 236).
 31. See also Donoghue, *Passions*, 89.
 32. "¿Qué otra cosa son los libros de amores y las Dianas y Boscanes y Garcilasos . . . puestos en manos de pocos años, sino cuchillo en poder del hombre furioso? . . . ¿Qué ha de hacer la doncellita que apenas sabe andar, y ya trae una Diana en la faldriquera?" (Malón de Chaide, 25–26). See also Rhodes, "Skirting," 138.
 33. "Y al contrario, es muy inútil y de poco provecho, la lección de las Celestinas, Dianas, Boscanes, Amadisés, Esplandianes, y otros libros llenos de portentosas mentiras. Y del abuso que Santanás con estos libros ha introducido, no se grangea cosa, sino que la tierna donzella, y mancebo, hagan, de tal lección, un

- tizón y fuego, y soplo incentivo de tropeza, donde enciendan sus deseos y apetitos de liviandad, y estos se vayan cevando poco a poco, hasta experimentar por obra, lo que por palabra ven" (Ortiz Lucio, 3r–v).
34. "Porque tras el sabroso hablar de los libros de caballerías bebemos mil vicios como sabrosa ponçoña . . . guarda el padre a su hija, como dizen tras siete paredes, para que quitada la ocasión de hablar con los hombres: sea más buena, y déxanla un Amadís en las manos, donde deprende mil maldades, y desea peores cosas, que quiza en toda la vida" (Cervantes de Salazar, 24).
 35. Carroll B. Johnson's 1995 "Amor-Aliqua" article on transgression and eroticism in *La Diana* was the most extensive study of the homoerotic nature of Selvagia-Ismenia episode until Velasco published an article on Selvagia's transmutable sexuality in 1997 ("Mapping"). In her 2008 *Erotic Philology of Golden Age Spain*, Martín also analyzes homoeroticism in the Selvagia-Ismenia episode. Prior to these essays, studies on *La Diana* had focused mainly on the importance of Neoplatonism and the influence of works such as León Hebreo's *Diálogos de amor* and Castiglione's *The Courtier*. While many critics follow the ideas of Wardropper, Avallé-Arce, and López Estrada, others question the role of neoplatonic philosophy in Montemayor's work. Solé-Leris, for example, argues that Montemayor's theory of love is actually more closely related to the fifteenth-century *Cancionero* attitude while Gil Polo's *Diana enamorada* better reflects León Hebreo's theories of Neoplatonic love (Solé-Leris, "Theory"). Rhodes, on the other hand, questions the overwhelming emphasis on Neoplatonism in *Diana* studies as she explores the relationship between Montemayor's religious writings and his pastoral novel (*Unrecognized*).
 36. Wardropper argues that "there is no overt homosexuality in the *Diana*," but he notes that "there is some playing with the elements that make it up. The author always takes care, after introducing a situation with homosexual undertones, to remove them or show them to have been illusory" (138). Solé-Leris likewise attributes Selvagia's desire for Ismenia to "the Neoplatonic's love of beauty: to see beauty is to desire it, in a spiritual sense, wherever it may be found" (*Spanish*, 39), while Cull emphasizes its temporary function of enticement for the reader: "Homosexuality is dangled before the reader's eyes in *La Diana* and other novels, but only as a come-on, and the authors are quick to withdraw from their suggestive illusions" (329). See also Avallé-Arce, 83; Mujica, *Iberian*, 130–31; and Rhodes, *Unrecognized*, 151.
 37. See also Carroll B. Johnson, 171.
 38. In accordance with traditional scholarship on *La Diana*, Rallo attributes Selvagia's attraction for Ysmenia to Neoplatonism, as well as to the author's use of the disguise complications found in romances of chivalry, epic poems, and the Italian novella: "Pero leyendo *La Diana* como tratado de amor, las relaciones de Selvagia-Ysmenia y Celia-Felismena no son más que posibles manifestaciones del Amor en el sentido neoplatónico. Si éste se engendra por la Belleza, y lo que une son las almas, el sexo carece de importancia. . . . [Es] un sentimiento exclusivamente espiritual." (But reading *La Diana* as a treatise on love, the relation-

- ships between Selvagia and Ismenia and Celia and Felismena are nothing more than possible manifestations of Love in the Neoplatonic sense. If this is conceived through Beauty, and what is united are the souls, then their sex is no longer important. . . . It is a feeling that is exclusively spiritual) (65).
39. “El amor que menos veces se acaba es éste, y el que más consienten pasar los hados, sin que las vueltas de fortuna, ni las mudanzas del tiempo les vayan a la mano” (Montemayor, 141).
 40. “Y después de esto los abrazos fueron tantos, los amores que la una a la otra nos decíamos, y de mi parte tan verdaderos que ni teníamos cuenta con los cantares de las pastoras, ni mirábamos las danzas de las ninfas, ni otros regocijos que en el templo se hacían” (ibid., 141–42). According to Andreas Capellanus, hugging was the third of four stages in the expression of love: “Since ancient times, four separate stages of love have been distinguished. The first stage lies in allowing the suitor hope, the second in granting a kiss, the third in the enjoyment of the embrace, and the fourth is consummated in the yielding of the whole person” (translation quoted in Walsh, 57).
 41. “Todavía contemplaba aquella hermosura tan extremada [de Ysmenia] . . . le hablé desta manera: ‘Hermosa pastora, . . . de lo que has oído podrás sacar cuál me tiene tu vista. Plegue a Dios que uses tan bien del poder que sobre mí has tomado que pueda yo sustentar el tenerme por dichosa hasta la fin de nuestros amores, los cuales, de mi parte, no le ternán en cuanto la vida me durare’” (Montemayor, 143–44).
 42. “El amor quedó, a lo menos de mi parte, tan confirmado que, aunque el engaño se descubriera, como de ahí a pocos días se descubrió, no fuera parte para apartarme de mi pensamiento” (ibid., 145).
 43. “No hace falta ser Freud para observar que enamorarse de alguien muy parecido al primer objeto erótico significa no la superación, sino la supervivencia de aquel deseo primitivo” (Carroll B. Johnson, 171).
 44. See also Martín, *Erotic*, 96–100. Rallo also notes a similarity between *El Cróton* and Selvagia’s tale in her edition of *La Diana* (142). Damiani cites another possible source for Selvagia’s narrative: “Selvagia’s account of how Ysmenia, who claims to be a man, disguises herself as a woman in order to enter the Temple of Minerva, was probably inspired by a classical novelette about a handsome young Athenian, Hymenaeus, who cloaked himself in female attire to participate in sacred festivals with his loved one. The theme is represented by Nicolas Poussin in a large painting called *A Floral Offering to Hymen, God of Marriage*” (41).
 45. “Nor yet less fair to her my sister’s face / Appeared, less fair her ways, less fair her guise; / Nor yet the heart returned into its place, / Which joyed itself within those dear-loved eyes / Flordespine deems the damsel’s iron case / To her desire some hope of ease supplies; / And when she thinks she is indeed a maid, / Laments and sobs, with mighty woe downweighed” (Ariosto, 261). For an extensive analysis of female same-sex desire in Ariosto, see DeCoste.
 46. “Y entonces muy *contenta* me llegué más a ella y le dije *medio riendo* ‘¿Cómo

- puede ser pastora que siendo vos tan hermosa os enamoréis de otra que tanto le falta para serlo, y más siendo mujer como vos?” (Montemayor, 141; emphases mine).
47. “Hacerme la burla . . . medio riendo . . . con grandísima risa” (ibid., 141, 143).
 48. “Le contó lo que conmigo había pasado, diciéndoselo muy particularmente, y con grandísima risa de los dos” (ibid., 145).
 49. “Muy contra natural, pues nunca una dama de otra se enamoró, ni entre los animales, qué pueda esperar una hembra de otra en este caso de amor” (Villalón, 252).
 50. “Recogidas en su cámara se acostaron juntas en una cama . . . y Melisa sospira con el deseo que tiene de satisfacer su apetito . . . y luego sueña que el cielo la ha concedido que Julieta sea vuelta varón . . . así estando el espíritu de Melisa deseoso pareçiale que vía lo que sueña; y así despertando no se confía hasta que tienta con la mano y ve ser vanidad su sueño (ibid., 254). *Orlando furioso* 25:42–43 reveals another version: “The ladies share one common bed that night, / Their bed the same, but different their repose. / One sleeps, one groans and weeps in piteous plight, / Because her wild desire more fiercely glows: / And on her wearied eyes should slumber light, / All is deceitful that brief slumber shows. / To her it seems, as if relenting heaven / A better sex to Bradamant has given. / [. . .] / Then from the empty dreams which crowd her brain, / She wakes, and, waking, finds the vision vain” (Ariosto, 261–62).
 51. “Despiertan como estaban abrazadas, / y en verse así quedaron espantadas” (Melchor de la Serna, 16).
 52. “Tú sólo das contento a las mujeres / y en tí se cifran todos sus placeres” (ibid., 18).
 53. “Diciendo estas palabras la viuda / tomó a Teodora encima y, abrazadas, / a la cama que estaba quieta y muda / hicieron hacer pausas delicadas. / La obra anduvo entre ellas tan aguda, / y estaban tan molidas y cansadas, / que mal su grado al fin se dividieron / y con el gran cansancio se durmieron” (ibid., 20).
 54. “Le fue forçado describirle ser muger, por lo cual no podia satisfacer a su deseo, y cómo no se satisfizo hasta que la tuvo consigo en su cama muchas noches” (Villalón, 256).
 55. “Le aprieta entre sus braços, y mil vezes le bessa en la boca con mucha dulçura. . . . Metiòle en una cámara secreta donde estando solos con bessos y abraços muy dulçes se tornó de nuevo a satisfacer” (ibid., 256–57).
 56. “Hizo que con su mano toque, vea y tiente” (ibid., 258).
 57. “Aunque ve, toca y tienta lo que tanto desea, no lo cree hasta que lo prueba; y así así decía: ‘Si éste es sueño haga Dios que nunca yo despierte.’ Y así se abraçaron con bessos de gran dulçura y amor, y gozándose en gran suavidad, con apazibles juegos pasaron la noche hasta que amaneciò” (ibid., 259).
 58. “Alanio también creo que me quería bien, y que desde aquella hora quedó preso de mis amores, pero no lo mostró por la obra tanto como debía. Así que algunos días se trataron nuestros amores con el mayor secreto que pudimos” (Montemayor, 145).

59. For the Spanish text, see Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 53.
60. “Ysmenia, que así se llamaba aquella que fue causa de toda la inquietud de mis pensamientos, teniendo ya imaginado hacerme la burla que adelante oiréis” (Montemayor, 141).
61. “Yo que estaba más enamorada della de lo que podría decir. . . De mi parte tan verdaderos . . . tan de versa . . . a lo menos de mi parte, tan confirmado” (ibid., 141–42, 145).
62. Since Selvagia describes Ysmenia as beautiful but “a bit manly,” we might question whether an alternative interpretation could be extracted from this episode. Given Juan Huarte de San Juan’s association of female masculinity with sexual transgression, it is telling that Ysmenia and not Selvagia is described as “a bit manly.” One might question, then, whether the reference to Ysmenia’s somewhat mannish appearance is included to add credibility to Selvagia’s attraction for her while also *making* Ysmenia’s claim to be a man more plausible, or if it adds another layer to the implied justification of Ysmenia’s willingness to engage in same-sex “petting,” despite the heterosexual resolution for both women. Cull explains Ysmenia’s mannish appearance as androgynous, which serves to defuse the “potentially explosive situation” of Selvagia’s love for Ysmenia (329).
63. As Rhodes reminds us, “In reference to women readers, however, the problem was their immorality, which was detrimental to ‘el bien de las almas.’ . . . Pastoral fiction . . . depicts women as desiring as well as desired characters” (“Skirting,” 137, 144).
64. Interestingly, the only two stories with lesbian subplots (while from different collections) are recounted by the same narrator, Matilde (Gossy, 21). See also Vollendorf, *Lives*, 62–67. Vollendorf also discusses women’s homosocial interaction in Mariana de Carvajal’s story “Love Conquers All” (*Lives*, 70).
65. Inés Dolz-Blackburn notes that “Estefanía seems to transmit the opinion of the author, given the continual defense of love between women” (77).
66. For the Spanish text, see Zayas, *Desengaños*, 317.
67. Ibid., 309.
68. Ibid., 306–10.
69. Ibid., 308.
70. According to Traub, women’s desire for other women on the early modern stage was implausible (unless construed as phallically imitative) precisely because it was “non-reproductive” (163).
71. Zayas, *Desengaños*, 318.
72. Ibid., 320.
73. Ibid., 318.
74. See Gorfkle, 84.
75. Zayas, *Desengaños*, 324–25.
76. Ibid.
77. Zayas, *Novelas*, 223–24.
78. Ibid., 224.

79. Ibid., 228.
80. Ibid., 227.
81. Ibid., 226.
82. Zayas, *Desengaños*, 350–51.
83. Ibid., 360.
84. Ibid., 510.
85. Ibid., 509.
86. Ibid., 510–11.
87. Greer defines the female bonding in Zayas as a process in which the woman proceeds from the “mother through men back to women” (107) and “not as sexual objects but as the ideal family” (114).
88. Zayas, *Desengaños*, 510.

CHAPTER 7

1. For comments on Erauso's portrait, see Velasco, *Lieutenant Nun*, 78.
2. Francesco Crescentio reportedly painted another portrait of “the Lieutenant Nun.”
3. See Borris, *Sciences*, 21–23.
4. “Apoyándonos en un retrato y en unas memorias escritas por nuestra heroína . . . el cuadro neuro-endocrino relatado parece corresponder a un hiperfuncionamiento hipófiso-suprarrenal, encuadrado en el término del virilismo y acompañado de ciertas anomalías eróticas, tan frecuentes en la psicosomática del tal cuadro” (Sánchez Calvo, 224, 228).
5. Along similar lines, Lorenzo Lorenzi affirms that the “orgiastic nature” of the witch figure in depictions such as the 1514 engraving *Happy New Year to the Clerics* (which portrays three women intertwined in “obscene poses”) “is obviously connected with Western society's obsession with female sexuality and Sapphic love” (89).
6. Other engravings take advantage of Ana de San Bartolomé's physical proximity to Teresa at the time of her death, a defining moment of Ana's life and iconography. Yet in a 1613 engraving produced at the request of Ana de Jesús (who most likely discussed the scene with the engravers), the rival nun is eliminated from the death scene (Wilson, “Taking,” 81–2). Among the various engravings of Ana de Jesús is a scene depicting Teresa passing her constitutions to Ana (97).
7. “Padre, y en ver pinturas hermosas, deleitándose en ellas o en un retrato de una persona con quien tuve o tengo una mala comunicación, pecaré contra el voto?” The confessor responds, “A lo del retrato respondo Señora, que como no es fácil estarse deleitando en el retrato de la persona con quien tiene o tuvo mala amistad, y no deleitarse en la persona; tantas veces quebranta el voto, cuantas se deleita en mirar el retrato: Acerca de la vista de otras pinturas aunque sean obsecenas, digo que si hay delectación morosa en sus obscenidades, se peca contra el voto, si no, no” (Borda, 46r–v).
8. I thank Stan Lombardo for his help with this text.

9. Both fictional and legal texts also mention the benefit of not having to worry about pregnancy with lesbian sex.
10. “Sin embargo, no les faltó un Juan Meurcio, hombre insolente, que para infamar a Luisa la hizo autora de unos diarios muy lascivos, que publicó en su nombre y en el diálogo VII mezcló una execrable mentira, tirando a denigrar a Vives, la cual por sí misma se hace increíble” (quoted in Prieto Corbalán, 41–42).
11. “Aunque falten en absoluto documentos probatorios, podemos tener la seguridad de que en estos años tuvo doña María que enfrentarse con la dura realidad de una gran pasión defraudada. Lo que en realidad aconteció a la novelista ni lo sabemos, ni probablemente podrá ser nunca conocido, pero el análisis comparativo de las *Novelas* que forman la primera parte de sus obras y los *Desengaños* que forman la segunda, nos proporcionan datos psicológicos suficientes para poder afirmar que algún episodio de carácter sentimental la perturbó hondamente, motivando un cambio en su íntimo modo de ser” (Hesse, 19). See also Martínez del Portal, 29.
12. “De que era bella no podemos tener la menor duda, de que fue desgraciada, tampoco” (Hesse, 20).
13. “No parece que llegara a casarse; y siendo mujer y admirada por sus dotes intelectuales, jamás encontró quien loara su belleza, lo que resulta un tanto extraño en aquella época, a poca que hubiera tenido. ¿Será mucho aventurar que debió ser más bien fea o, al menos, para decirlo con mayor dulzura, poco agraciada? Resulta, sin embargo, difícil concebir que quien supo describir el amor, las relaciones amorosas, con tal realismo y demostración de tener un conocimiento vivo de él y de ellas no hubiera estado nunca enamorada, no hubiera gustado nunca la pasión” (Rincón, 10). See also Amezá, *Desengaños*, xxii.
14. “Si aceptamos que la autora nació en 1590, parece poco verosímil que este pesimismo fuese fruto de un percance amoroso, aunque pudo sufrir desengaños masculinos de otra índole” (Yllera, 19). See also Montesa, 27–28, and Barbeito Carneiro, 162.
15. For the Catalan text, see Kenneth Brown, 231.
16. “For the immortal Doña María de Zayas, for whoever wishes to see womanly wonders, without traveling to *Lesbos* . . . will enjoy a Mytilean *Sappho*” (translation quoted in Greer, 22; emphasis mine). For the Spanish text, see Delgado, 382.
17. “Ni eres mujer ni eres hombre” (quoted in Ruiz-Gálvez Priego, 15).
18. See also Ruiz Morcuende, 67.
19. For the Spanish text, see Barrera y Leirado, 508.
20. “El tema principal de este texto es la ‘amistad femenina’ y toda la diversidad con que puede ser presentada. ¿Cómo son las relaciones entre las protagonistas? ¿nos dejó Zayas ejemplos específicos de lo que ella *entendía* sobre esta dinámica? ¿podemos ver lesbianismo en esta relación?” (Delgado, 380).
21. Bergmann and Smith explain the interrogative “¿Entiendes?” as “Do you understand?” when translated literally, but culturally interpreted as “Are you queer?” (1).
22. Vollendorf also offers homoerotic readings of the two friends’ plays (Zayas’s

Friendship Betrayed and Caro's *Valor, Offense, Woman*) but without involving speculation about the authors (*Lives*, 79–87).

23. "¿Tuvieron o no tuvieron relaciones apasionadas con mujeres? ¿Se casaron Zayas o Caro alguna vez? No lo sabemos, pero sí que ella y Ana Caro convivieron juntas" (Delgado, 381).
24. A century before Sor Juana wrote her poetry in Mexico, Sor Violante del Cielo in Spain (1601–1693) wrote a series of four love poems that used a female poetic voice to express desire for another woman. In two poems devoted to "Menandra," the imagery unmistakably participates in the lyric tradition of a mystical-amorous union that employs violence and passion to highlight the speaker's desire for her beloved. Because the speaker's soul is in the hands of her love interest, the latter's arrows of rejection result in self-inflicted wounds. While critics have been hesitant to categorize Sor Violante's poems as "lesbian," they acknowledge that same-sex passion is an unavoidable theme in this series. Olivares and Boyce, for example, believe that "it would be an anachronism to limit our interpretation of these poems to an expression of lesbian love," but then comment in a footnote that "such a possibility cannot be totally discarded. Nonetheless, it is possible that such expressions of feminine affection were completely conventional" ("Sor Violante," 196 and 200n5). Martín, on the other hand, explores Sor Violante's love poetry to women through the historical lens of female friendships and intimacy, rightly concluding that it is still "uncharted territory" with much work yet to be done to understand fully the cultural significance of Sor Violante's poetry and the rhetoric of female friendships ("Rhetoric," 68). See also Dugaw and Powell.
25. See also Merrim, and Kirk.

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